

2022

Valley Bible Church Men's Breakfast Presentations

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Saved!

(Part 1 of 4)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (ESV)

In the third chapter of the gospel bearing his name, the Apostle John clearly expounded the good news of salvation, of being **saved**. Our text verse (above) is arguably the best-known verse in the New Testament.

Salvation is the state, the condition, of being rescued – delivered – *from* the power and penalty of sin and spending eternity in the Lake of Fire, and it is being delivered *to* righteousness – right standing with God – and life everlasting with Him in Heaven.

Salvation is a spiritual rebirth, frequently referred to as being “born again” (John 3:3, 1 Peter 1:3, 23), “born from above,” “regenerated,” and other terms.

In the text verse, note that “perish” and “eternal life” are separated by the word “but,” indicating that they are opposite results. *Perishing* describes the result of failing to trust Christ as Savior; *eternal life* describes the result of trusting Christ. Note that there is no middle ground. A person either accepts Christ and is granted eternal blissful life in God’s presence in Heaven, or she or he perishes – is condemned to eternal ruin without remedy – and will spend eternity in conscious torment in Hell, the Lake of Fire, under the wrath of God. Yes, Hell is a real, physical place, not a state of mind. And yes, the torment is forever, never ending.

Christ’s coming to earth wasn’t to condemn – judge – us for our sins, it was just the opposite. Motivated by love for His creation (us), God sent – gave, sacrificed – His sinless only Son to provide a way for us to be **saved** – rescued from the eternal consequences of our sin. Here’s how John describes it:

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (3:17)

Note the last three words of that verse: *saved through Him*. Faith in God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is the only way to salvation, to deliverance from the deserved penalty due for our sins.

Despite God’s gracious provision for their salvation, some people deliberately condemn themselves to perish eternally. How? We’ll discuss that in Part 2 of this series.

VBC Men’s Breakfast
2022-1

Saved!

(Part 2 of 4)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (ESV)

In Part 1, we initiated a discussion of salvation (being **saved**) as presented in John 3:16-19. From verse 16, we determined that *perishing* – going into eternal ruin – is the opposite of *eternal life*. The former is the result of rejecting or ignoring the Lord Jesus Christ; the latter is the result of accepting Christ as your Savior from sin. Verse 17 assures us that God sent His Son to be the Savior of the world, not to condemn (judge) us for our sins.

We finished Part 1 with this statement: “Despite God’s gracious provision for their salvation, some people deliberately condemn themselves to perish eternally.” How do they do that? The next verse has the answer:

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. (3:18)

According to this verse, people condemn themselves by refusing to ***(believe) in the name of the only Son of God.*** The belief spoken of in this verse is more than an intellectual assent as to who Christ is, it’s a personal commitment to Him as Savior.

Note that one who does not believe is condemned already. We are sinners by birth and by deed. Ignoring or rejecting Christ is the same as not believing in His name. It results in self-imposed, eternal condemnation.

Why would anyone deliberately condemn himself, thus effectively choosing eternal death over eternal life, torment over bliss? The short answer is in verse 19: Because he prefers spiritual darkness – sin – to God, and thus will not believe in the name of the only Son of God.

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

The Light that came into the world is the Lord Jesus Christ (John 8:12). The refusal to come to the Light for salvation condemns a person to remain in spiritual darkness, now and for eternity.

Some people believe that God “sends people to Hell.” The truth is that God doesn’t send anyone to Hell; a man condemns himself by his refusal to accept the free gift of salvation purchased by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:23, Ephesians 2:8-9). Let’s explore that in Part 3.

VBC Men’s Breakfast
2022-2

Saved!

(Part 3 of 4)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (ESV)

In Parts 1 and 2, we determined that John 3:16-19 outlines the good news of salvation: why God provided it, how He provided it, the results of our accepting or not accepting it, and how and why mankind may reject it. Have you memorized those four verses from John 3?

In Part 2, we also considered the fallacious statement that “God sends people to Hell.” Let’s explore that with three well-known, well-respected, authors.

“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.”

J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology: A Guide to Historic Christian Beliefs*

“... Hell is not the choice of God, it is the choice of man. We are not consigned there, but by rejecting Him we have entered the pathway of destruction. It’s a choice with a damnable destiny.” Evangelist Ravi Zacharias at 1986 International Conference of Itinerant Evangelists

“There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell, choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell.” C. S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce*

Hell, the Lake of Fire, was originally created for Satan and the angels who rebelled with him (Matthew 25:41). When sinful humans choose not to come to God, when they choose to reject Jesus Christ, their ultimate end is to be sent to the place prepared for the devil and his angels, out of the presence of God. The horror of Hell is inconceivable to the human mind.

There will be degrees of punishment (torment) in Hell, commensurate with the degrees of sinfulness as indicated in the books opened at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Only the unsaved will be present at that judgment. The Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge; the Father has committed all judgment to Him. Regardless of the level of punishment, it will be horrific. When God resurrects the bodies of the unsaved prior to the judgment, He will make those bodies capable of being tormented forever without perishing. Our God is perfectly just in all things; His judgments are fair.

Is punishment in the Lake of Fire really forever? Some people say “no.” They teach the aberrant doctrine of Annihilationism. We’ll discuss that in Part 4.

VBC Men’s Breakfast
2022-3

Saved!

(Part 4 of 4)

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (ESV)

In Parts 1 and 2, we determined that John 3:16-19 outlines the good news of salvation: why God provided it, how He provided it, the results of our accepting or not accepting it, and how and why mankind may reject it.

In Part 3, we considered the veracity of the statement that “God sends people to Hell” and found it to be untrue. As we saw, Hell is self-chosen. People consign themselves to Hell when they choose to reject the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin.

Part 3 ended thusly: “Is punishment in the Lake of Fire really forever? Some people say ‘no.’” Let’s explore that.

The teaching that the wicked will be consciously punished for their sins for a finite time period only, then be annihilated (exterminated without remedy, ceasing to exist) is known as *annihilationism* and *conditional immortality (conditionalism)*. It is false teaching.

Annihilationism is an aberrant doctrine; the Bible doesn’t teach it. In contrast to annihilation, the Bible teaches the immortality of the soul of both the saved and unsaved.

Recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, Christ Jesus described His future judgment of the Gentiles who survive to the end of the seven-year Tribulation period. He said this of the unsaved Gentiles (and, by extension, all unsaved people):

These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous (saved) into eternal life. (verse 46, NASB)

The adjective “eternal” (Greek *aionion*), appearing twice in the above verse, literally means, “everlasting, without end.” It refers to the destiny of the wicked and the righteous. If the wicked are only tormented for an “age” (as Annihilationism teaches) then the righteous will only experience life in Heaven for an “age.” If believers will be in Heaven forever, unbelievers will be in Hell forever.

In this four-part series, we’ve determined that perishing and eternal life, both mentioned in John 3:16, are opposites. Every person ever conceived will ultimately experience one or the other of those two destinies – eternal *perishing* as inconceivable torment forever in Hell – the Lake of Fire – or *eternal life* of bliss in Heaven with the three persons of the holy Trinity.

We are all condemned sinners by birth and by deed. The only way to change your eternal destiny is to trust the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin. Have you done that? If you haven’t, there’s still time. The Bible says today is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Don’t delay. Do it today for the assurance that you are eternally

Saved!

VBC Men’s Breakfast, 2022-4

Lean Not!

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)

Do you need help, direction, guidance from God? We all do. In our text verse, God has promised that He will provide that help, that He will “direct (our) paths.” Let’s see what He requires of us.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart. Trusting God with all your heart means giving Him complete control of your life: Family, finances, employment, health, relationships, time, talent, and everything else. Note that trust and commitment are related. We are willing to commit ourselves to people we trust. Trusting God with all your heart means you have committed every aspect of your life to Him.

Lean not (don’t depend) on your own understanding. Our understanding of so many things is severely limited. We have little knowledge of the future – frequently, no knowledge – and little, if any, control. But God has perfect knowledge and perfect understanding. He controls everything (sovereignty), He knows and desires what’s best for us (omniscience) and can bring it to pass, get it done, do it right (omnipotence).

So, who would you rather trust, yourself or God? Do you want to lean (depend) on your own understanding or God’s?

In all your ways acknowledge Him. *Acknowledge* (Hebrew *yada*) means *know*. We are to *acknowledge, know* Him, recognize His presence in all of life. We are to study His Word – the Bible – to know Who He is and what He is like. We are to listen for His voice (He “speaks” to us through His written Word and the Holy Spirit Who lives within us), communicate with Him frequently, seek His will in all we do, obey Him, put Him first in our lives (Matthew 6:33), and dedicate our lives to Him (Romans 12:1-2).

The more you **acknowledge** (know) **God**, the easier it will be to **trust Him** and to **lean not** on your own understanding. Here’s the result:

He shall direct your paths. This is God’s promise that He will guide you, give you wisdom and direction for the path of life ahead of you.

Remember: To successfully claim the promise of His help, His direction, for everything in your life, you must **acknowledge God, trust Him**, and

Lean Not!

VBC Men’s Breakfast
2022-5

Time

(Part 1 of 2)

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God
Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV)

When did time begin? Before creation was there time as we know it – a succession of seconds, minutes, hours, days, ... ? Perhaps not. Scripture indicates that time itself may be a created reality, a reality that began when God created the universe. Some scholars believe that time came into being when the creation came into being. In our text verse, the word *universe* literally means *the ages*. The verse could be translated as follows: *By faith we understand that the ages were formed by a word of God.* He spoke the ages – time – into existence.

Church father Augustine said the universe was not created in time but that time itself was created along with the universe. If that's correct, we would have to say that the universe was created *with* time rather than *in* time.

God Himself is above time, He transcends time. He inhabits all time simultaneously and can instantly see the past, present, and future. They are all one ever-present “now” to Him. He is sovereign, omniscient, and omnipotent, knowing and controlling all things simultaneously. God is not surprised by anything because He controls everything. There is never any panic in Heaven!

What about us? How does time affect us? What is our relationship to time?

By God's design, we are time constrained, living second by second for an indeterminate period (to our knowledge), with little – sometimes, no – knowledge of the future or control thereof.

For the Christian, Scripture indicates that ***our times are in God's hands*** (Psalm 31:15) – all of life's circumstances are under God's control – and we are to ***trust Him at all times*** (62:8).

Because God is sovereign, we must remember that our future times (plans) are subject to His will, and it's foolish to make plans without including Him in them. As James, the half-brother of Jesus, expressed it,

***Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will travel to such and such a city and spend a year there and do business and make a profit.”
You don't even know what tomorrow will bring – what your life will be!
For you are like smoke that appears for a little while, then vanishes.
Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.”***
James 4:13-15 (HCSB)

If, as James wrote, ***You don't even know what tomorrow will bring***, isn't it wise to commit your ways to God and ask Him to direct you, to show you His will for your life? Are you doing that?

In Part 2 of this series, we'll continue this discussion of our relationship to time.

VBC Men's Breakfast, 2022-6

Time

(Part 2 of 2)

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God

Hebrews 11:3 (NKJV)

In Part 1, we began a discussion of time, God's creation of, and relationship to, time, and our relationship to time. We determined that we are time constrained, living second by second for an indeterminate period (to our knowledge), with little – sometimes, no – knowledge of the future or control thereof.

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

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

Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor. Psalm 39:4-5 (NKJV)

Regardless of how long you live, compared to eternity your life on earth is but vapor, a brief puff of smoke. You cannot – you dare not – presume upon tomorrow, or even the next moment. You may have neither. Now is the day of salvation (2 Corinthians 6:2). Why? Because life has no guarantees of survival. You could meet God before this day is over. Are you ready?

Days pass, seasons pass, years pass, and we eventually die and go to our eternal destiny, either to bliss in Heaven with God or to horrific, unrelenting, torment in Hell, separated forever from God. In our short lifetime, our decision for or against Christ as our Savior is thus all-important.

When will you die? Only God knows. He determined the exact time of your conception and He has predetermined the exact time of your demise (Psalm 139:13-16). What are you doing with the time God has given you? We are instructed to be ***making the best use of the time, because the days are evil*** (Ephesians 5:16, ESV). The Psalmist wrote, ***How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness all the time*** (Psalm 106:3).

If you have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, but haven't fully surrendered your life to Him, presented your life to Him as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1), you should. Now is the

Time

VBC Men's Breakfast
2022-7

First and Second Resurrections

(Part 1 of 2)

Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

In this verse, as in some others, “many” denotes “all.” This Old Testament verse indicates that resurrection is not just a New Testament teaching. Everyone will be resurrected – raised from the dead, physically brought back to life, body and soul reunited – but not everyone will share the same eternal destiny.

The Bible speaks of a first resurrection and a second resurrection. These are not chronological resurrections but types of resurrections. The first resurrection is for those who, during their lifetime, received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin; the second resurrection is for those who didn’t. Stated differently, the first resurrection is the resurrection of Christians, the second resurrection is the resurrection of the unsaved. They will have vastly different outcomes.

First Resurrection

The apostle John described the first resurrection as the “resurrection of life” (John 5:29). Several such resurrections are described for us in the New Testament.

- After His death on the cross, Christ Jesus was the first person resurrected, He was the “first fruits of those who are asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20).
- Matthew described the resurrection of some of the dead saints in Jerusalem after Christ’s resurrection (Matthew 27:52-53).
- Before the start of the seven-year Tribulation, the bodies of the dead church-age saints will be resurrected and join the living church-age saints in the air at the Rapture as we are escorted to Heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).
- At the end of the Tribulation, the bodies of those martyred during the Trib will be resurrected and will rule with Christ – and us – during the thousand-year Millennium (Revelation 20:4-6).

Note that the Bible doesn’t explicitly indicate when the Old Testament saints and the Millennial saints will be resurrected. But we know that God isn’t going to omit them! Some scholars suggest that the OT saints will be resurrected at the end of the Tribulation, and the Millennial saints at the end of the Millennium.

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Revelation 20:6 (NASB)

The *second death*? We’ll discuss that and the second resurrection in Part 2.

First and Second Resurrections

(Part 2 of 2)

Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Daniel 12:2 (ESV)

In Part 1, we determined that everyone will be resurrected – raised from the dead, physically brought back to life, body and soul reunited – but not everyone will share the same eternal destiny. The Bible speaks of a first resurrection and a second resurrection. The first resurrection is for those who, during their lifetime, received the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin; the second resurrection is for those who didn't. We discussed several first resurrections documented in the New Testament. Let's look now at the second resurrection.

Second Resurrection

The Second Resurrection will occur after the thousand-year Millennium (Millennial Kingdom) which follows the Tribulation. As the first resurrection is the “resurrection of life” (John 5:29), the second resurrection is the “resurrection of death” – eternal death. It is the resurrection of all the wicked who ever lived. There will be only one second resurrection. Hitler and others of his ilk will be included, but so will the non-Christian moralist.

At the second resurrection, the physical bodies of the unsaved dead of all ages will be resurrected from their graves – wherever they may be and in whatever condition they may be – to again be joined, reunited, with their souls. They will then individually stand before the Lord Jesus Christ at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-12) to be judged and sentenced to eternal punishment in Hell, the Lake of Fire. This will be the Second Death.

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. Revelation 20:13-14 (NASB)

The second death will be physical death of eternal duration in the Lake of Fire. Dying forever in horrific torment. At the second resurrection, God will make the resurrected bodies capable of being tormented forever without perishing.

Only unbelievers – the wicked, the unsaved – will be present at the Great White Throne Judgment. They have already made their choice during their lifetime to reject God. The fact that a person is present at this judgment means they have no chance of redemption – there is no turning back – and are about to be cast physically alive into the Lake of Fire for eternity – and they know it. One can only imagine the sense of dread that will permeate their minds as they await sentencing. They will have all eternity in conscious, horrific torment to regret their decision to reject God.

You will personally experience a future resurrection. Which resurrection will it be, the ...

First or Second ?

VBC Men's Breakfast
2022-9

You're a WIP!

... Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Philippians 2:12b-13 (NLT)

Do you remember this popular saying among Christians a few years ago?

Please be patient with me, God isn't finished with me yet!

It's still true! As our text verse reminds us, ***God is working in you***. He isn't finished with you yet.

If you've received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin, you're a WIP, a Work In Progress. (Don't confuse a WIP with a wimp!)

What work is in progress? Conformation! "Conform" is a transitive verb, defined as, "to make similar in form, nature, or character." ***God is working in you*** to conform you to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ:

For those He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers.

Romans 8:29 (HCSB)

At the moment of your salvation, God clothed you with a garment of Christ's perfect righteousness (that's *Justification*, Isaiah 61:10, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Over time, God is working to conform you to greater Christlikeness (that's *Sanctification*, Romans 8:29). When you see your Savior face to face, the conforming process will be instantly completed (that's *Glorification*, Romans 8:30).

Note that the text verse from Philippians indicates how God is working in you: He is ***giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him***. God doesn't just give you the desire to do what pleases Him, He also gives you the power, the ability, to do it. There may be times when you don't have even the desire to do God's will. When/if that occurs, ask Him to help you want what pleases Him.

Since we ultimately will be totally conformed to the image of God's Son, we should not be conformed now to this world which is at enmity with God (James 4:4).

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. Romans 12:2 (NASB)

How can you avoid being conformed to this world (the beliefs and values of the age in which we live)? By being transformed. How can you achieve that transformation? The above verse indicates it's ***by the renewing of your mind***. And how is that accomplished? By reading, studying, and meditating on God's Word, the Bible. Are you doing that?

Remember, God isn't finished with you yet, and

You're (still) a WIP!

VBC Men's Breakfast
2022-10

Righteous

None is righteous, no, not one Romans 3:10 (ESV)

The word, *righteous*, is used in many different contexts. You've perhaps heard law enforcement personnel refer to a "righteous arrest" or a "righteous sentence." In this sense, *righteous* essentially means "morally good."

But there's a much more important definition: *being in a right relationship with God.*

As indicated in our text verse, not one of us is inherently righteous. In fact, we are just the opposite, we are *unrighteous*. We all do things that are against – contrary to – what is right, and that corrupts our relationship with God, the One who ultimately determines right and wrong.

Looking at our lives, how could God consider any of us to be righteous? He couldn't. Regardless of who we are or how much "good" we do, we cannot earn righteousness by our own efforts. So if we're to be truly righteous in God's sight, He Himself must declare us to be so and credit that righteousness to us individually.

Why is it important to be righteous, in right standing with God? Because it is the sole determinant of our eternal future. Only righteous people will spend eternity in God's presence. The unrighteous will spend eternity in conscious torment.

Humanity – mankind – is the high point of God's creation. God created each of us with an eternal soul – that part of us which is the true person. Every person ever conceived has a soul that will never die. We all will consciously live forever – somewhere. And that somewhere depends on what we do while we are living on earth. After our physical death, there will be no opportunity to change our eternal destination. That's why righteousness in this life is so critically important. But as we've determined, none of us is righteous.

What now? Is it possible to be righteous in spite of all the wrong (the Bible calls it "sin") we've done in life? Fortunately for us, the answer is, "yes, it is." But we can't become righteous on our own, we need God's help.

Knowing that our personal misdeeds and failures (sin) would make us unrighteous and thus separate us from Him, God addressed and solved the problem of our sin. And He did it in an unfathomable way. So that we could be declared righteous, God willingly sacrificed Jesus, His sinless only Son, in our place, as our Substitute, to pay the penalty due for our sin and thus make it possible for us to be righteous. That's God's gift to us.

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

How do you personally receive God's gift of righteousness and be assured of eternal life lived in His presence? By trusting the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior from sin.

...if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:9 (NASB)

Only Eight!

(Part 1 of 3)

The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ... God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!" Genesis 6:5, 13 (NLT)

The time from the creation of the universe to the start of the flood has been calculated as 1656 years. According to genealogical records in Genesis, human lifespans before the flood could be several hundred years. Population growth would be rapid with such lengthy lifespans. After the flood, lifespans gradually decreased. (Noah was approximately 600 years old when the flood started. He lived 350 years after the flood.)

Our text verses indicate that except for Noah (which means “rest”) and some of his family – a total of eight people – all people were totally consumed with sin. There were/are people in every subsequent generation who could be so described, but not the entire population worldwide.

Satan knew that God had promised a Savior, a Redeemer (3:15), and perhaps was trying to corrupt all mankind in an attempt to thwart the fulfillment of that promise. Evil angels were also somehow involved in those human sins (6:1-4). God imprisoned those angels temporarily in *tartarus*, believed to be the lowest compartment of Hades (2 Peter 2:4). They will ultimately be cast into the Lake of Fire (Matthew 25:41).

According to our text verses, mankind had ***filled the earth with violence***. Someone has commented that to be thus filled, the earth also had to be filled with people. Estimates of the earth’s population at the time of the flood vary widely, between 4 and 15 billion people. All but eight people were so wicked that God decided to destroy them (Genesis 6:7). If the population was 4 billion, God spared 0.0000002% of them!

Think about that. Eight – **Only Eight!** – people out of billions were adjudged righteous and spared from death in the flood. Here’s how Noah is portrayed:

Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord ... Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God (6:8-9, ESV).

God destroyed billions of people with the worldwide flood in 40 days (7:4)! Does that mean that He isn’t a God of love? No! Quite the opposite. God loved humanity so much that He didn’t want future generations to live like those He destroyed. God takes sin seriously. Do we?

In Part 2, we’ll continue the story of the worldwide flood and the people who survived it. Remember, there were

Only Eight!

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Only Eight!

(Part 2 of 3)

The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ... God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!"

Genesis 6:5, 13 (NLT)

In Part 1, we determined that the pre-flood world was so populated with people who were totally given over to wickedness and violence that God decided to destroy them and the physical world. **Only Eight!** righteous people were to be spared: Noah, his wife, their firstborn sons (Ham, Shem, and Japheth), and the sons' wives (7:13).

God gave Noah instructions for building an ark, a sea-going watercraft in which to preserve Noah's family and representatives of each kind of animal (6:14-16, 7:13-14).

The wicked people had an estimated 55 - 75 years to repent of their wickedness. That's how long Noah was building the ark. God described Noah as a *preacher of righteousness* (2 Peter 2:5, 1 Peter 3:20). Imagine the verbal ridicule and abuse Noah and family must have been subjected to during those ark-building years!

When the ark was finished, God gave Noah seven days warning that the flood was about to start (Genesis 7:4). He used that time to get his family and the animals settled on the ark. On the eighth day, water poured out of the sky as the vapor canopy above the earth condensed. The eruption of the *fountains (reservoirs) of the great deep* (7:11) continually sent massive amounts of water up to the surface of the earth. This deluge continued non-stop for 40 days and nights (7:4). Prior to this time, the earth had been watered from local evaporation and condensation (2:5-6). Rain, water coming down from the sky, was thus unknown to the people on earth.

After the 40-day deluge, the top of every mountain on earth was covered to a depth of at least 22 feet (7:20). Except for marine creatures, every living thing not in the ark was destroyed (7:11, 2 Peter 3:6).

One hundred and fifty days after the flood began, the waters began to recede and the ark came to rest on solid ground somewhere on the mountains of Ararat (Genesis 8:3). It took another 2½ months for the waters to recede to the point where Noah could see the tops of the other mountains (8:5). The waters continued to recede for almost another five months.

Noah and family (and animals) exited the ark 371 days (53 weeks) after entering it. One of the first things Noah did was build an altar and worship God by sacrificing some of the animals from the ark (8:20). (God had instructed Noah to take extra pairs of clean animals and birds for this purpose [7:2-3].)

Noah and family are now out of the ark. What is the total population of the entire earth?

Only Eight!

Like Noah, we too live in a very sinful world. Will God ever again judge the earth with another worldwide flood? We'll discuss that in Part 3.

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Only Eight!

(Part 3 of 3)

The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ... God said to Noah, "I have decided to destroy all living creatures, for they have filled the earth with violence. Yes, I will wipe them all out along with the earth!"

Genesis 6:5, 13 (NLT)

In Parts 1 and 2, we looked in some detail at the worldwide flood of Noah's day. As our text verses indicate, ***God had observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth and decided to destroy all living creatures.*** He did destroy them, sparing **Only Eight!** people out of a population of several billion.

Every person born since the flood (that's us) is a descendant of one of the three sons of Noah – Ham, Shem, or Japheth – and their wives (9:18-19)! God essentially started the human race over again from the people on the ark.

We finished Part 2 of this series with this question: "Like Noah, we too live in a very sinful world. Will God ever again judge the earth with another worldwide flood?" Let's answer that.

Have you seen a rainbow recently? It is the sign of a covenant (agreement) God made with Noah and his sons – and us (***all successive generations***, Genesis 9:11-12) – that He would never again destroy all flesh with a worldwide flood. When God sees a rainbow in the sky, He promises to remember His covenant that ***never again shall the water become a flood to destroy all flesh*** (9:13-15).

God promised that there won't be another worldwide flood, but in the future, He will destroy the entire present universe by fire.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. 2 Peter 3:10 (NASB)

The "Day of the Lord" refers to times of terrifying judgment from God on the wicked for the sinfulness of the world. The term can apply to past (OT) and future (NT) events.

Several future Days of the Lord when the wrath of God will be unleashed are identified in the New Testament. Here are two. Revelation 19:11-21 describes the defeat of Antichrist's armies at the end of the seven-year Tribulation. Revelation 20:7-15 describes the crushing of the Satanic rebellion at the end of the Millennium and the judging of the unsaved at the Great White Throne. Following that, the present universe with all its effects of the curse will be destroyed by fire and a new, perfect, universe created for our eternal home!

In this series, we've considered two cataclysmic judgments on the physical earth, one is past (water) and one is future (fire). The Apostle Peter told us that ***the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire*** (2 Peter 3:7). The godly were present on earth at the first judgment, they will not be present on earth at the next judgment.

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2022-14

Eternal Punishment

... all have sinned ... Romans 3:23 (NASB)

Based on this well-known verse – and many others – it would be foolish to deny that all mortals (us) are sinners. Against Whom have we sinned? The eternal God, the Lawgiver (Psalm 51:4). Who can forgive our sins? Only God. Only the One Who has been sinned against has the prerogative to forgive.

God set the rules, defining what's right and what isn't. Where are those rules “written”? In our consciences (Romans 2:14-16) and in His inspired written Word, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16).

What happens when we break God's law? We are subject to punishment, to death. That's the wages of sin, the result He defined:

... the wages of sin is death ... Romans 6:23

By sinning, we are accumulating a vast sin debt that we owe God. To be settled, a debt must either be paid off or forgiven. Our sin debt is too large for us to pay off, but the Lord Jesus Christ paid it in full for us. Like any gift, for it be effective, forgiveness must be received. Have you received it? Have you trusted Christ as your Savior from sin?

For those who choose not to accept Christ's payment for their sins, they must personally suffer – pay – for them. For how long? Eternity. Why?

Because ...

- God is an eternal being
- God is the Lawgiver
- All sin is ultimately against God and His holy law (Psalm 51:4)
- God never forgets sin

Therefore, unforgiven sin has **eternal** consequences.

Look at it this way ...

- If you sin against another (mortal) person, the offense and consequences cease when that person dies.
- If (when!) you sin against God, the offense and consequences never cease, they are eternal because He is eternal, alive forevermore, and He never forgets sin.

While it's true that God never forgets sin, He doesn't hold the Christian's sin against him because on the cross His Son, Christ Jesus, paid the penalty for that sin. That's the meaning of God's forgiveness: Not holding your sin against you.

The unsaved will suffer for their sins, and it indeed will be

Eternal Punishment

The Jesus of the Bible

(Part 1 of 2)

I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man comes to the Father but through me John 14:6 (NASB)

Who is this One Who claims that no one can come to God the Father except through Him? The Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son, the second Person of the Trinity. What you believe about Him and what you do relative to that belief determines your eternal destiny.

“He did not come to show us the way, teach us the truth, and give us the life, though He does all of this. He is the Way to God, the Truth of God, and the Life in God.”
Dr. Henry M. Morris in *The New Defender’s Study Bible*

Some religious traditions and cults 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 warned in 2 Corinthians 11:4.

It’s vitally important that we lean our eternal destiny on the real Jesus Christ. In the Olivet Discourse (the most detailed end-times discourse delivered by Christ), 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.

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12 (NASB)

Here are examples of the incorrect teaching by some traditions and cults regarding Jesus the Christ (the Messiah):

- Some teach that Jesus was “a god” created by God the Father. That’s not the Jesus of the Bible.
- Some teach that Jesus was just one of many gods. 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 created as the Archangel Michael, the first creation of God the Father. That’s not the Jesus of the Bible.
- Some teach that Jesus is the spirit brother of Satan. That’s not the Jesus of the Bible.
- Some teach that Jesus was conceived as a result of a physical relationship between God the Father and Mary. 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.

In Part 2, we’ll discover more about the real Jesus,

The Jesus of the Bible

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The Jesus of the Bible

(Part 2 of 2)

In Part1, we began a discussion of the real Jesus – Who He is, and Who He isn't. Let's continue that critically important discussion.

Simply stated, Jesus is the Son of God, the Member of the Holy Trinity who became a man to die on a cross to save (rescue) us from the penalty of our sins. He became one of us that He might taste death for us – as our substitute – and thus provide for our salvation (Hebrews 2:9).

In the Old Testament, God established the necessity of the shedding of blood for the remission – forgiveness – of sins (Leviticus 17:11). The blood of innocent animals, although temporarily acceptable, was insufficient for the permanent remission of sins (Hebrews 10:4).

To fulfill His mission as *the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world* (John 1:29), Jesus, the One sacrificed for our sins, had to be sinless, and He had to be clothed in human flesh because only a man could sacrifice his human life and shed his human blood to provide permanent forgiveness of sins to those who would trust Him as Savior. The eternal Son of God became flesh, made in the likeness of man in order to redeem him, to free him from the eternal consequences of sin.

If Jesus were not sinless, His death would have been payment for His own sins, not ours. The only way to have a sinless man was to have a man Who was God, because only God is sinless. And so it was. At the appointed time (Galatians 4:4), God sent His Son to earth to ultimately die as our substitute.

Christ Jesus could not be conceived by human parents because every naturally conceived child inherits his parents' sin nature and is a sinner from birth.

A supernatural, not natural, conception was required for the incarnation of the One who was to be the Savior, and that's what God provided. The specially created cell God implanted in the virgin Mary's womb was totally holy, with no stain of sin.

The man who developed from this divinely implanted holy cell was our Savior, the God-man, fully God and fully man, the Lord Jesus Christ, God in human flesh. Jesus was God from the instant of conception.

Can a man or woman conceived by natural means become a god? No, but he or she can become a godly person. It starts with receiving the Lord Jesus Christ – the true Jesus of the Bible – as your Savior from sin.

Don't be fooled! Only the Jesus of the Bible has the power to save a sinner and make him or her a true child of God. Here's John 3:36 (HCSB):

The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who refuses to believe in the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him.

Is your faith in the real Jesus,

The Jesus of the Bible ?

VBC Men's Breakfast, 2022-17

Job

My servant Job... a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil Job 1:8 (NASB).

That was God's description! Job was an immensely wealthy man with a wonderful, harmonious family of ten children, and voluminous herds of sheep, camels, oxen, and donkeys. The prophet Ezekiel included Job with Noah and Daniel regarding righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14). From what we read in the Bible, I believe Job could be described as a man who had presented his body as a living and holy sacrifice to God (Job 1:4-6, Romans 12:1).

Satan approached God and claimed that Job was faithful to Him only because He had blessed him. Satan further suggested that Job would curse God to His face if the blessings were removed! God knew what Job's response would be, of course, but He allowed Satan to destroy Job's children, houses, herds, etc. (Job 1:9-18). Despite this, Job continued to trust God. His response was to worship God (1:20).

Satan returned to God and said "***Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse You to Your face.***" (2:4-5). With God's permission, Satan afflicted Job severely with horrific, painful boils from head to foot, yet he refused to curse God.

Job's wife told him, "***Curse God and die!***" Job's response was, "***Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?***" Job 2:10 informs us that "***In all this Job did not sin with his lips.***"

You may remember that three of Job's friends suggested reasons for his trials, but only made matters worse (2:11 – 37:24). At one point, Job becomes bitter, anxious, and scared, even cursing the day he was born (3:11-26). He engages in a long conversation with God (chapters 38 – 41). Job ultimately passes judgment on himself and is vindicated (42:1-6).

Was God punishing Job by allowing Satan to afflict him? No! According to God's own words, Job was the most righteous and godly man in the world of his day (1:8, 2:3). So why did God allow this dire calamity in Job's life? We don't know; the Bible doesn't answer that question. Neither will we necessarily always get an answer from God regarding the problems in our lives. But we know that as Creator, God has the sovereign right to use and test His creatures as He wills, always for His good purposes.

How does Job's story end? ***The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning...*** (42:12)

Job never gave up his hope or faith in God despite the trials. That should be an inspiration to each of us.

From the story of Job (and other biblical accounts), we learn that Satan is very powerful, but God is infinitely more powerful, in fact, He's omnipotent. Secondly, we see that Satan cannot afflict a believer without God's permission! Trials in a believer's life are "Father filtered."

God is inscrutable – His ways are beyond finding out. But we can trust that all He does is **always** for our best. We are His blood-bought children, we *belong* to Him.

VBC Men's Breakfast, 2022-18

Why Am I Still Here?

(Part 1 of 2)

As we age – and we all do – some Christians, especially those experiencing ill health and/or advancing chronological age, may ask the above question. Stated differently, “Why am I still on this earth, why doesn’t God take me to my eternal home with Him where I long to be?”

We’ll explore some possible answers before we finish this topic, but we may never completely understand why God chooses to leave us on earth as long as He does. He’s God, we’re not.

Let’s establish some foundational truths, then discuss the question at hand.

Christian, do you believe God is sovereign, that He’s eternally in control of everything in His created universe? You should believe it because that’s what the Bible teaches, and it’s unequivocally true.

Think about this: If there were a single out-of-control, rogue molecule in this universe – and there isn’t – God wouldn’t truly be our omniscient, omnipotent, sovereign Creator.

On a personal level, what does it mean that God is sovereign? It means that He is right now controlling every aspect of your life. He has done so since your conception. And even before that, He determined the date of your physical demise (Psalm 139:16). He knows precisely how many days you will live on earth, because He’s controlling that too!

God’s preeminent attribute is holiness. He is totally separated from all sin, and hostile toward it. Everything God does is subject to His holy nature. What He does is right, good – always, only good – and according to the plan He put in place before creation. He never makes a mistake or does anything wrong. God knows what He’s doing. Everything always goes according to His plan, for His good purposes. There are no surprises in Heaven!

Do we always understand what God does and why He does it? Of course not. We’re not omniscient! Can we control everything in our lives? Foolish question, right? The answer is, “no, we’re not omnipotent.” Do we always agree with everything God causes or allows, especially in our personal lives? Of course not. He knows that too.

Does the sovereign God we serve, the God Who loved us enough to sacrifice His only Son on a Roman cross to make it possible for us to have our sin debt erased so we could spend eternity in His presence, does that God – the only true God – have the right to do with us as He pleases? Absolutely! And that includes determining and controlling our lifespan. He bought us with the innocent blood of His sinless Son. We belong to God. We are His by right of creation and by right of redemption.

In Part 2 of this series we’ll answer the question at hand:

Why Am I Still Here?

VBC Men’s Breakfast
2022-19

Why Am I Still Here?

(Part 2 of 2)

In Part 1 we asked the question, sometimes posed by ill and/or elderly Christians – and others, “Why am I still on this earth, why doesn’t God take me to my eternal home with Him where I long to be?” Since that question includes, “why doesn’t God ... ?”, in Part 1 we laid a foundation of truths regarding God’s sovereignty and holiness. Now we’re ready to address the question *per se*.

In simple terms, as a Christian you’re still on earth for at least three reasons:

- To glorify God and make Him known to others
- To serve God and obey Him
- To help (serve) others

We’ll discuss each of these reasons individually. As we’ll see, they are sometimes interrelated.

Glorify God

To “glorify” God means to acknowledge His greatness, and honor Him by praising and worshiping Him because He, and He alone, deserves to be praised, honored and worshiped.

We glorify God and make Him known to others by listening to (reading and hearing) His Word, submitting to Him and obeying His commands, telling of His work in our lives – how He saved us from sin, and works in our hearts and minds every day – and by our actions, words (spoken and written), and attitudes.

Serve God

We serve God when we do His work in His strength in a manner that brings glory to Him.

Serving God includes, but is not limited to, church activities – teaching, administration, music, nursery, cleaning, tech, finance, maintenance, etc. Serving God should be a joyous response to His love for us, not a duty.

Help (Serve) Others

This is an expansive topic. Helping others, meeting the needs of others – Christians and non-Christians – can take many forms. The following is just a sampling.

You can encourage and pray for others, comfort others, be a godly example to others, provide financial assistance to others if you’re able, provide your knowledge and experience to others. Note that most of these things can be done regardless of physical limitations.

If you’re physically able, you can provide your skills and labor to others (many applications, such as repair and maintain), clean, cook and provide meals, provide respite care, run errands, provide needed transportation, and help in many other practical ways.

God could call you home at any time. So why are you still here? Because God still has more for you to do for Him!

Some Things Haven't Changed. And Won't!

(Part 1 of 2)

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

Our world has changed much in the last few years, and will continue to do so, perhaps at an increasing rate. But some things haven't changed. There are still truths we can depend on. Let's consider some of them.

God's love for humanity (us) hasn't changed and His offer of salvation and eternal life for all who will trust Christ as Savior hasn't changed. ***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life*** (John 3:16).

God's Word hasn't changed. ***Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven*** (Psalm 119:89). The Bible is still inspired, infallible, and inerrant. It is still our only guide for faith and practice. Everything God says is true – eternally.

God's forgiveness hasn't changed. It's still available to those who will come to Him through Christ. ***The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*** (1 John 1:7)

The way to God hasn't changed. We can come to God only through the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son. Jesus said to Thomas the disciple, ***"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me"*** (John 14:6).

God's promises haven't changed. In his book, *All the Promises of the Bible*, Dr. Herbert Lockyer claims that God has made more than 7400 promises to us! What the apostle Peter called ***"exceeding great and precious promises"*** are still true (2 Peter 1:4).

Heaven is still the future home of those who trust Christ as Savior. As the apostle Paul expressed it, ***we would rather be away from these earthly bodies, for then we will be at home with the Lord.*** (2 Corinthians 5:8)

Our eternal security hasn't changed. The person who has truly trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin cannot lose their salvation by sinning, or ceasing to believe, or any other way. Jesus said, ***"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand"*** (John 10:27-29).

Why are all the above true? Because God is sovereign and immutable, He hasn't changed and He cannot, does not, and will not change! In Part 2, we'll discuss more things that haven't changed, and consider what could result if God Himself could change.

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Some Things Haven't Changed. And Won't!

(Part 2 of 2)

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

In Part 1, we noted that while our world has changed much in the last few years and is continuing to do so, there are some things that haven't changed. We described seven of those things. Let's continue that discussion, then consider what could result if God Himself could change.

Sin hasn't changed. What was considered sin at the beginning of time is still sin, and it will remain sin forever. God's standards of right and wrong haven't changed. Woe to **those who call evil good and good evil** (Isaiah 5:20). They are fooling themselves. Sin is still sin.

The punishment for sin hasn't changed. God still despises sin and will punish it – eternally. **The wages of sin is death.** (Romans 6:23) It always has been and always will be. Those people who die without trusting Christ as their Savior from sin will experience eternal death away from the favorable presence of God forever.

The Lake of Fire (Hell) is still the eternal destiny of those who die without a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said the unrighteous “**will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life**” (Matthew 25:46).

Every yet-unfulfilled prophecy in the Bible will be fulfilled. That hasn't changed. Everything God promised will happen. In his farewell address to the people of Israel, Joshua said, “**none of the good promises the Lord your God made to you has failed. Everything was fulfilled for you; not one promise has failed.**” (Joshua 23:14) That's true of us also! There are reportedly several hundred biblical prophecies that already have been fulfilled “to the letter,” and there are several hundred unfulfilled prophecies that will yet be fulfilled just as precisely!

Now let's briefly consider the question, “What could be the result if God Himself could change?”

If God could change, He could fail to be omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, holy, and all His other attributes. Think of the ramifications of that!

If God could change, He would be capable of error, and the Scripture He inspired could be wrong. Would there be any standard of truth?

If God could change, He could stop loving us and we could have no assurance of His commitments, certainly not of our salvation and eternal security.

If God could change, we could have no confidence in His judgments or His Word. We would have no consistent moral standard. How would we know right and wrong, good and evil?

Thankfully, regardless of the changes in this world,

Some Things Haven't Changed. And Won't!

Just, Justifier, Justified

For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.

Romans 3:25a (NLT)

Because God is holy and just, He will not, cannot, ignore sin. He requires payment for sin.

The penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23). We are all guilty of sin (Romans 3:10, 23), thus we all deserve eternal death, separated from God's favorable presence forever.

How can our Creator forgive our sin and yet remain Just – true to His righteous character – without requiring our death? By providing a substitute sin bearer and punishing Him with death instead of us. Our text verse indicates that's what He did: ***God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin.*** God imputed my sin to His Son – put my sin to Christ's account – and imputed Christ's perfect righteousness to me (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Without compromising His standard of justice, God provided what sinners need to be righteous in His sight – in right standing with Him and not guilty of sin. By providing His sinless only Son as our substitute sin bearer, God fulfilled (met) His righteous requirement that sin must be punished by death. God is thus both **Just** and the **Justifier**. We are the **Justified** when we by faith personally accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin.

As the text verse indicates, ***People are made right with God*** (justified) ***when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.***

What about those who lived in the centuries before Christ Jesus died on the cross? The second part of the text verse addresses that also:

This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past,²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

Before Christ died, God passed over the sins of the old covenant saints who offered sacrifices according to the law of Moses to atone for evil. Justice was not done when people sacrificed bulls and goats, but God accepted these offerings in His great forbearance because He knew His Son would offer the necessary atonement at just the right time (Galatians 4:4).

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Radical!

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Romans 12:1 (NASB)

As a Christian, how much more radical can you get than to **present your (body) a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God**? The person who presents himself thusly to God gives up everything, including his right to control and direct his life!

Why did the Holy Spirit, through Paul, admonish us to present our *bodies* to God? Think about it.

What's most precious to us? Our lives! And what makes it possible – enables us – to live our lives? Our physical bodies! God knows that if you're willing to present your physical body to Him as a holy sacrifice, you're willing to present everything else also.

When applied to us, "holy" means "set apart or dedicated to God" – it's *belonging* to God. The primary meaning of "holy" is not moral purity, although that is included.

"To be holy means that all we are and all we have belongs to God, not ourselves, and that every aspect of our lives is to be shaped and directed toward God." Joel Scandrett, *Holy To The Core*, May, 2007, *Christianity Today*

Speaking of our bodies, in Ephesians 5:29 the apostle Paul reminded us that ***no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it.***

Yes, we take care of these bodies, we nourish and cherish them – feed and care for them (NIV), protect them (Amplified Bible).

Why do we invest so much time and money and effort in maintaining these physical bodies? Because they're where we live! We want to be in good health so we can enjoy life and serve God. To accomplish that, we need to practice healthy habits regarding what we eat and drink (and how much), avoiding harmful substances, and other things that are detrimental to physical health.

Our bodies are also the dwelling place of God the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We don't want to pollute, defile, His abode. We must exercise caution regarding what we listen to, read, watch, where we go, what we do, say, who we associate with, and other practices, remembering that all we do is done in the actual presence of God. Every place you go, God goes. Every word you speak, God hears. Everything you look at, God sees. He not only knows what you do, but why you do it. Think about it.

In summary, as our text verse indicates, we are to present – willingly, joyfully, unreservedly – all that we have and are to God as a living and holy sacrifice for His service. And that includes our physical bodies. That's being

Radical!

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Promise Kept!

From that time Jesus began to point out to His disciples that it was necessary for Him to go to Jerusalem and to suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and to be killed, and to be raised up on the third day.

Matthew 16:21 (NASB)

This verse documents that Christ Jesus promised to be physically resurrected after death. The literal fulfillment of that promise meant that all the other promises He made were valid. If Christ can conquer death – and He did – then He can conquer anything!

As Dr. Henry Morris declared, the resurrection is the crowning proof of the genuineness, the absolute truth, of Christianity:

“The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the crowning proof of Christianity. Everything else that was said or done by Christ and the apostles is secondary in importance to the resurrection. If the resurrection did not take place then Christianity is a false religion. If it did take place, then Christ is God and the Christian faith is absolute truth.”

Without the physical resurrection of Christ, Christianity would crumble to become just another empty religion, we would have no Savior, our faith would be useless and vain, and we would have no salvation. The apostle Paul expressed it concisely:

If Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15:17 (NASB)

We all sin (Romans 3:10, 23) and as a result we all die (Romans 6:23). The question is not whether we will die physically, it's where we will spend eternity – in Heaven with God or in Hell with Satan and the fallen angels. It's your choice. Choose wisely. It's for eternity.

The good news is that Christ's resurrection is the guarantee that those who have trusted Him as their Savior from sin will be resurrected also and will spend eternity in His presence:

... Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised. 1 Corinthians 15:21 (GNT)

For the salvation and eternal security of those He chose to be His own, the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and died on a Roman cross, was buried, and was resurrected the third day according to His promise. Rejoice Christian, ...

Promise Kept!

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Yes, I Am

(Part 1 of 5)

And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” Luke 22:70 (NASB1995)

This verse records a portion of the verbal exchange between the Jewish Sanhedrin (a judicial body like the U.S. Supreme Court) and the Lord Jesus Christ after He was arrested and beaten. This was the first trial of Christ Jesus. It was followed by trials before Pilate, Herod, a second trial before Pilate, a scourging, and crucifixion, a punishment described by the Roman writer Cicero as “the cruelest and most hideous punishment possible.”

Let’s consider several evidences that the Lord Jesus Christ indeed was – and is – as He claimed, the Son of God.

His Perfect Life

Speaking to the unbelieving Jews in the Temple, Jesus asked,

Which one of you convicts Me of sin? John 8:46

Only a perfectly holy One could speak these words. No one listening to Him rose to the challenge. And there were many people present who would have if they could!

The author of the book of Hebrews described Christ Jesus, our High Priest, as

One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Hebrews 4:15

Think about that. Christ was sinless. Why is that important? If He were not sinless, He could not have died for our sins – yours and mine – in our place. Instead, He would have been dying to pay the penalty for His own sins, and ours would remain unforgiven and without remedy. We would have continued under God’s condemnation, destined for an eternity in Hell, the Lake of Fire.

His Power

Luke 8:22-25 is one account of Jesus and His disciples entering a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee and encountering *a fierce gale of wind* [that] *descended on the lake* and began to swamp the boat. They were in serious trouble – in danger of perishing – and the disciples knew it! And the Savior? He was sleeping (an evidence of His humanity). The disciples awakened Him and made Him aware of their plight. Luke reports that He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped immediately. The lake became calm. Here's the disciples response:

Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?

Only the Creator, God the Son, could perform this miracle!

In Part 2, we’ll continue this discussion and look at other evidences that the Lord Jesus Christ was/is indeed the Son of God and answered truthfully,

Yes, I Am!

Yes, I Am

(Part 2 of 5)

And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” Luke 22:70 (NASB1995)

In this series, we’re investigating evidences that the Lord Jesus Christ was/is the Son of God, as He claimed before the Sanhedrin (our text verse). In Part 1, we briefly discussed His perfect life – that He was sinless – and why that made possible our personal salvation. We also considered the account of Christ rebuking the winds and waves, an evidence of His power. Let’s look now at another evidence of that power.

Matthew 8:28-34 records Christ Jesus encountering two demon-possessed men in the country of the Gadarenes. These men were so violent that no one could even come near them. The demons shouted at Christ, ***What business have we to do with each other, Son of God?*** His enemies, the demons, knew who He was and confessed it: ***Son of God.*** He commanded the demons to leave the two men and enter a nearby herd of 2,000 pigs. Confronted with a superior (omnipotent, in fact) force, the demons had no choice but to obey. Who but the Son of God could do that!

The Bible has many reports of Christ healing the sick, and even bringing the dead back to life. Perhaps the best known account of His power to raise the dead is the story of Lazarus. You can read the complete account in John 11:1-44. (Pay special attention to verses 25-26.)

Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, was very ill in Bethany. The sisters sent word to Jesus, Who was at least one day’s journey away from them. He purposely delayed two days before starting for Bethany. When He arrived there, He was told that Lazarus had died and been in the tomb for four days (being omniscient, He already knew that). Lazarus’ body was already in a state of rapid decomposition. In other words, he stunk! Jesus went to the tomb, ordered that the protective stone be removed from the front of the sepulcher (cave), and then shouted, ***Lazarus, come forth.*** The result? ***The man who had died came forth.*** Only the Son of God could have done that!

Someone has quipped that if Jesus had not said, “Lazarus, come forth,” every dead person in that cemetery would have responded!

Thus far in this series, we’ve seen that Jesus was sinless and had absolute power over nature, disease, sickness, and death. Who but the Son of God could do what He did! The apostle John, eyewitness to the Son’s life, wrote the following:

And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written. John 21:25

In Part 3, we’ll look at the fulfilled prophecies regarding Christ’s birth and death, more evidences that the Lord Jesus Christ was/is indeed the Son of God and answered truthfully,

Yes, I Am!

Yes, I Am

(Part 3 of 5)

And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” Luke 22:70 (NASB1995)

In Parts 1 and 2, we considered the evidences of Christ’s perfect, sinless life and His unlimited power, as proofs of the veracity of His claim to be the Son of God. We proceed now to another evidence, fulfilled prophecy.

Fulfilled Prophecy

Perhaps you’ve heard prophecy defined as, “history written in advance.” In ages past, God instructed His chosen prophets to record – write down – His prophetic word. Prophecy – foretelling the future – ceased with the completion of God’s Word, the Bible. Pastors now are the modern-day “prophets,” *forth-telling* (proclaiming God’s Word), not *fore-telling* (predicting the future).

The content of the Bible is said to be one-fourth prophecy. Stated differently, about 25 percent of divine revelation was prophetic when originally written. To date, hundreds of prophecies already have been exactly fulfilled; hundreds more will be.

More than 100 messianic prophecies were fulfilled at the first coming (advent) of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Among the literally fulfilled prophecies are that Messiah would be from the seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15), born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14), from the line of Seth (Genesis 4:25), from the line of Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3), from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10), from the line of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16, Jeremiah 23:5-6), born in the city of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), would be the heralded Messiah (Isaiah 40:3), the coming King (Zechariah 9:9), the sacrificial offering for our sins (Isaiah 53), betrayed for 30 shekels of silver (Zechariah 11:12), pierced for our sins (Zechariah 12:10), crucified with criminals (Isaiah 53:12), killed about AD 33 (Daniel 9:24-25), and resurrected from the dead (Psalm 16:10).

Who other than Jesus could have fulfilled all these prophecies? The probability of one man fulfilling all 15 of the above prophecies is infinitesimal. And these are just a proper subset of the messianic prophecies!

In Part 4, we’ll look at the evidence of Christ’s resurrection – additional proof that the Lord Jesus Christ was/is indeed the Son of God and answered the Sanhedrin truthfully when He said,

Yes, I Am!

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Yes, I Am

(Part 4 of 5)

And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” Luke 22:70 (NASB1995)

In Parts 1 - 3, we considered the evidences of Christ’s perfect, sinless life, His unlimited power, and His fulfillment of messianic prophecy, as proofs of the veracity of His claim to be the Son of God. The supernatural resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is another powerful evidence.

His Resurrection

Early in His public ministry, Jesus foretold His death and resurrection (John 2:19). Three years later, His physical resurrection was the crowning proof of Christianity!

Through the pen of the apostle Paul, God’s Holy Spirit stated that Christ *was shown to be the Son of God when He was raised from the dead* (Romans 1:4, NLT). Christ’s resurrection distinguishes Him from the rest of humanity, proving that He was/is indeed the Son of God. No other man had ever predicted his own death and resurrection – and brought it to pass. Christ resurrected His own dead body after three days in the grave!

The resurrection also proved that the Father had accepted the Son’s sacrifice of Himself on the cross in the place of sinners. Christ’s death was substitutionary. It was for us, those He chose to save.

Jesus was crucified on a Friday. When the Savior was declared dead, Joseph of Arimathea wrapped the body in a linen cloth and placed it in his own new tomb (cave). He then rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and departed. At the request of the Pharisees, Pilate set a guard at the tomb and affixed a seal on the stone at the entrance.

Early Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene and “the other Mary” (the mother of James the lesser) prepared spices to anoint Jesus’ dead body. When they arrived at the tomb, they saw that the stone had been rolled away. Entering the tomb, they saw the burial wrappings, but the body of Jesus was gone. Two angels suddenly appeared. They asked the women, *Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen!* (Luke 24:5-6)

Over the next 40 days, the risen Christ made many public appearances. To one person, to groups of people – one time to more than 500 people at once (which may have been just the number of men) [1 Corinthians 15:6]. He ate meals with his disciples. He physically appeared and disappeared at will. He didn’t need doors to enter a room. Walls were not a barrier to Him.

In Part 5, we’ll conclude this series by considering one more evidence that the Lord Jesus Christ was/is indeed the Son of God and answered the Sanhedrin truthfully when He said,

Yes, I Am!

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Yes, I Am

(Part 5 of 5)

And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.” Luke 22:70 (NASB1995)

In Parts 1 - 4, we considered the evidences of Christ's perfect, sinless life, His unlimited power, His fulfillment of messianic prophecy, and His resurrection, as proofs of the veracity of His claim to be the Son of God. We'll conclude this series by looking at one more powerful evidence.

Changed Lives

Here's God's candid evaluation of the human heart (the mind, the seat of emotions) from birth:

The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9

Our natural inclination is to sin, to do what is wrong. As the apostle Paul reminds us, ***there is none righteous, no not one*** (Romans 3:10). There is only one permanent remedy for this lethal condition (6:23): becoming a new person in Christ by inviting Him into your life as your Savior and Lord. He won't come into your life without a personal invitation. Have you done that? Here's His promise:

... if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Corinthians 5:17

Christ's power to change the human heart is further evidence that He is indeed the Son of God, just as He claimed in our text verse.

Although the New Testament Gospels document many of Jesus' deeds, these four books are not all-encompassing. The apostle John reminded us of that and stated the purpose for the Gospel that bears his name:

...many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name. John 20:30-31

As we've seen in this five-part series, Jesus Christ is indeed who He said He was/is: the Son of God. As such, He alone is worthy of our worship, praise, and dedication.

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Nineteen Years

June 23, 2003 – nineteen 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.

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2022-31

Holy, Holy, Holy

(Part 1 of 2)

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!

Revelation 4:8 (ESV)

When he was called into Heaven to be shown future events, the apostle John observed four Living Creatures (angels) continually worshiping God and repeating the words of our text verse. Centuries earlier, the prophet Isaiah observed the angelic Seraphim worshiping God, repeating the three words, *holy, holy, holy* (Isaiah 6:3).

The *trihagion* – the three-fold repetition of “*holy*” – emphasizes God’s otherness, His separateness from His fallen creation, the fact that He is unlike any other being. He is intrinsically holy, we are not. The trihagion also emphasizes that God is a tri-unity, three persons in one.

As applied to God, “holy” means without sin, totally separated from all moral defilement and hostile toward it.

Dr. John MacArthur describes God’s holiness thusly:

“He never does anything wrong. He never errs. He never makes a misjudgment. He never causes something to happen that isn’t right. There are no degrees to His holiness. He is holy, flawless, without error, without sin, fully righteous, absolutely, infinitely holy. ... God’s holiness is best seen in His hatred for sin.”

Dr. Henry Morris III wrote the following:

“Holiness is the preeminent attribute of God. Everything God does is subject to the unchangeable rock of God’s holy nature. Even the love that drove Him to become man and die a substitutionary death for our sins is driven by the holiness that demands justice for the horrible rebellion against that very holiness.”

The supreme demonstration of God’s holiness was the cross, the crucifixion of His Son. God is so holy that He had to turn away from His own Son because Christ was bearing man’s sin – yours and mine. God paid the ultimate price – the death of His Son – necessary to satisfy His holiness. On the cross, Christ paid our sin debt, because the price had to be paid even if it cost Him His own life.

Because He is infinitely holy, no one can stand in God’s presence apart from absolute personal holiness. The Bible says that nothing that defiles can enter Heaven (Revelation 21:27). God’s own unblemished holiness is the ultimate criterion by which we are judged.

Perhaps you’ve heard – and maybe sung – the song, *Holy, Holy, Is What The Angels Sing*. The lyrics include the words, *and I expect to help them make the courts of Heaven ring*. That speaks of the future, of course. But not everyone will be allowed in Heaven to worship and praise the Savior. What determines who will and who won’t? We’ll discuss that in Part 2.

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Holy, Holy, Holy

(Part 2 of 2)

In Part 1, we defined, described, and discussed God's holiness. We finished Part 1 by introducing the hymn, *Holy, Holy, Is What The Angels Sing*. It suggests that in the future some people will join the angels in Heaven singing praises to God. We then posed the question, "What determines who will and who won't be allowed in Heaven to sing with the angels?"

The answer is simple. It's one word: *perfection*.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "***you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect***" (Matthew 5:48).

Bottom line: No one will enter Heaven or dwell there who isn't perfect (Revelation 21:27). How can you personally achieve that absolute perfection? You can't! You're a sinner by nature and by deed (Romans 3:23). Regardless of how good you are, or how many good works you do, you cannot meet God's standard, you cannot be perfect.

Our eternal, omniscient, omnipotent God knew that, and designed a way for a sinful man to be made perfect in His sight. But, as we determined in Part 1, it came at an infinite price to Him and His sinless Son. The apostle Paul stated it simply: ***God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin*** (2 Corinthians 5:21). God imputed my sin to His Son – put my sin to Christ's account. When I trusted Christ as my Savior, God imputed Christ's perfect righteousness to me.

Only the blood of the sinless Son of God can wash away your sins and make you perfect in God's sight. Revelation 1:5 describes Christ as ***Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood***. *Selah* (pause and think about that)!

Before you were conceived, God knew every sin you would ever commit, yet He still substituted His sinless Son for you on a Roman cross. The Lord Jesus Christ thus paid in full the sin debt you owe God. But, as with any gift, it isn't effective until it's received.

The refrain (chorus) of the song mentioned above includes these words: *but when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings, For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings*. Have you felt the joys of trusting Christ as your Savior from sin? If not, you can. Today. The apostle Paul reminded us that ***today is the day of salvation*** (2 Corinthians 6:2). Why today? Because you may not have a tomorrow. Trust Christ now and you will be able to sing with the angels ...

Holy, Holy, Holy

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2022-33

The Gospel

(Part 1 of 2)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16 (NASB)

In our text verse, the apostle Paul described the Gospel as ***the power of God for salvation***. In the NASB Study Bible, Pastor John MacArthur commented that *the Gospel is effective because it carries with it the omnipotence of God. Only God's power is able to overcome man's sinful nature and give him new life.*

So, what is the Gospel?

Broadly speaking, the Gospel is the entirety of Scripture. More narrowly, the Gospel is the *good message* (that's the literal meaning of "*gospel*") that through His life, death, and resurrection, the Lord Jesus Christ provided a way for guilty sinners to be reconciled to a just and holy God (1 Corinthians 15:2-4).

We have all sinned (Romans 3:10, 3:23) and are personally responsible for our sins. As a result, we stand condemned to spend eternity separated from God, Who is infinitely holy. The Bible refers to this eternal condemnation as *death* – spiritual death. It is the wages of sin (Romans 6:23). Payment is due. This eternal separation from God is also referred to as *perishing* (John 3:16). It is eternal ruin in horrific, conscious torment. It is not annihilation.

Everyone who has ever been conceived will live forever. Your immortal soul/spirit is eternal. Your physical body is mortal. Unless you are a Christian, and during your lifetime Christ Jesus returns to earth to rapture (snatch away) those who have trusted Him as Savior, you will die physically then later be resurrected, with body and soul reunited to live forever – somewhere (Hebrews 9:27). Heaven or Hell. It's your choice. Yes, really.

God is the ultimate Lawgiver, so all wrongs (sins, transgressions, trespasses, iniquities) are ultimately against Him (Psalm 51:4). Because He is just, God must judge sin. He will not, indeed cannot, ignore sin. It would be against His holy nature to do so.

Although we are personally responsible for our own sins, we are incapable of doing anything that could "earn" the forgiveness of those sins. There is nothing you can do to pay the penalty due for your sins. You cannot "work your way to Heaven" (Ephesians 2:8-9). That's why God, because of His great love for you (John 3:16), sent his sinless Son, Jesus Christ, to take your sin upon Himself (2 Corinthians 5:21) and, by dying, pay the penalty that was due (Romans 5:8). Christ made *your* sin *His* sin and died on your behalf.

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed. 1 Peter 2:24

In Part 2, we'll finish the description of the Gospel, and explore why the Bible is so frequently disparaged in our society.

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The Gospel

(Part 2 of 2)

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:16 (NASB)

In Part 1, we began a discussion of what constitutes the Gospel, the good message (good news) that by His sacrificial death, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, provided a way for sinners to be reconciled to our holy God, declared righteous, and be assured of eternal life in His presence.

Jesus was the God-man, fully God and fully man. As man, He was your substitute, dying in your place on a Roman cross more than 2,000 years ago. Three days later, Jesus resurrected His own dead body and rose from the grave (John 2:19), proving that He is God and has conquered death (physical and spiritual) for us. The resurrection is also proof that His Father had accepted Jesus' sacrifice for our sins. The penalty for sin has been paid once for all time (Hebrews 10:10).

Christ Jesus – the Jesus of the Bible – is the only way to God. There is no other Savior (John 3:36, 14:6, Acts 4:12). The provision has been made for God to forgive your sins based on what Jesus has done for you. His death made it possible for you to be reconciled to God forever (Romans 5:10), but to be effective, this gift must be personally received by a deliberate act of your will. You must invite Christ into your life as your Savior from sin and Lord of your life.

This good news, the Gospel of salvation, runs throughout the Bible, in both Old and New Testaments. The “scarlet thread” of Jesus' atoning blood starts in Genesis and ends in Revelation.

As the bearer of such good news, why is there so much hatred for the Bible? Why the continuing criticism and ongoing attempts to disqualify and destroy the Bible? Other religious texts – so-called “holy books” – are not subject to that treatment. Only the Bible.

The answer is simple: Hatred for the Bible is Satan's work. He knows the Bible is truth and that it's divinely inspired – literally, God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16). The true Gospel is proclaimed only in the Bible. It's the only book God ever wrote.

By the power of the Gospel, people are convicted of their sins and brought to Christ for salvation, thus removing them from Satan's spiritual kingdom and delivering them from an eternal future in Hell. That makes the Bible a threat to Satan and a hated target for him.

Now you know the Gospel – the good message of reconciliation with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, why it's opposed so vehemently, and by whom. In our text verse, the apostle Paul said he was not ashamed of proclaiming the Gospel, and he told us why: It is God's power for bringing people to Himself. It still is. We should not be ashamed. Regardless.

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2022-35

Sowing and Reaping

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

2 Corinthians 9:6 (ESV)

Our text verse states a well-known, well-proven principle in agriculture: Sowing and Reaping. The apostle Paul appropriately applied this principle to Christian giving. We can too.

Our motive for financially contributing to God's work is important. It should never be "give to get," as some people erroneously teach today. That's tantamount to trying to bribe God. *Newsflash:* You can't bribe God! The God who created – and owns – the universe doesn't need our money. But we need to give it.

Giving in support of God's work is for our blessing and our benefit. But we're sometimes 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). Even 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).

We are only stewards, caretakers, of the resources God has entrusted to us. Financial security is not found in a bank account or a retirement fund, but in a right relationship with the One Who owns everything in Heaven and on Earth.

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

God wants us to give cheerfully, not grudgingly (2 Corinthians 9:7). 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.

While God expects us to financially support His work, believers are not expected to go into debt or impoverish themselves in order to give. We are to give in proportion to the resources we have, not what we don't have (2 Corinthians 8:12). That's why there are no set giving amounts or percentages stipulated in the New Testament.

Here's the bottom line: God will not be a debtor to any man. In other words, *you can't outgive God*. 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. That's ...

Sowing and Reaping

VBC Men's Breakfast
2022-36

Robbery!

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 by the people, the priests had to neglect their Temple duties and work at secular jobs to support themselves. God viewed this as Israel robbing Him; that is, stealing from His work. The basic principle is that God’s people are responsible to support God’s work. God chose this method of support for our benefit, our blessing. 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 of Malachi 3 (below): 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 guilty of

Robbery?

VBC Men’s Breakfast
2022-37

Don't Borrow Trouble!

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

Matthew 6:34 (ESV)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Properly planning for, and praying about, tomorrow is time well spent. Worrying, being anxious, about tomorrow is time wasted. The apostle Paul admonished us thusly:

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)

Paul’s message to us: *Do not be anxious about anything.* In other words,

Don't Borrow Trouble!

VBC Men’s Breakfast

2022-38 (based on the author’s December 3, 2015, presentation with the same title)

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 your life today that's working for your good?

All Things!

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2022-39