

12-31-2023, COTR Texarkana

Title: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, and Forever

Purpose: Provoke people to pause and reflect on their life as the New Year begins and decide to live the rest of their life in a way that pleases God.

Truth for Today: I can decide today what kind of Christian I will be and what I will do for God in the New Year.

Text: James 4:13-17

Topic: New Year, Past, Present, Future, Eternity, Forever

Series Title: The Man in the Mirror... What kind of person will I be in 2024?

Series purpose: Provoke people to prioritize their lives around Biblical values and imperatives in 2024.

Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, and Forever

I. Introduction

A. New Series Title: The Man in the Mirror... What kind of person will I be in 2024?

1. As a New Year begins, there are some things I naturally do, e.g., Planning turkey season, reminder 1st month house jobs, yard leaves, etc. but Spiritual priorities are different. They must be deliberate choices, or they get lost in the busyness of life and we miss opportunities that will affect us for eternity.

B. Today's message is entitled, "Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, and Forever". It's a message about our past, present and future. Time passes quickly and tomorrow isn't guaranteed but living with spiritual priorities will impact us eternally. I want you to pause and reflect on your life as the New Year begins and decide to live the rest of your life in a way that pleases God.

C. [James 4:13–17 (ESV) Come now, you who say, "**Today or tomorrow** we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—¹⁴ yet **you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.** ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, "**If the Lord wills**, we will live and do this or that." ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So whoever **knows the right thing to do** and fails to do it, for him it is sin.] I want to help you focus on the 'right things' in 2024.

II. Yesterday...a look at the past. (2023 and prior)

A. (1) As we look at the past, let's thank God for His goodness and for what He has done for us. Don't take God's blessings for granted. [Ephesians 5:20 (NLT) And **give thanks for everything** to God the Father in the name of

our Lord Jesus Christ.] E.g., Personal level: our family safe and healthy, new roof home, food to eat, closet full clothes (Christians Earthquake Turkey/ India cyclone destroyed pastors house, Christian homes and churches in Pakistan burned and destroyed). We're not any better than these people but neither are we entitled to God's goodness. We should recognize God's blessings and say thank you.

B. (2) As we look at the past, let's celebrate what we did for Jesus yesterday. E.g. Prayers we prayed, souls won to Christ, our good works done in the name of Christ (e.g., feed poor), giving money to build the KOG, live by Biblical character and values, and our obedience to God's Word and Spirit are all remembered by God and will one day be rewarded. Context, [Acts 10:2–4 (NCV) Cornelius was a religious man. He and all the other people who lived in his house **worshiped the true God. He gave much of his money to the poor and prayed to God often.** ³...An angel of God came to him and said, "Cornelius!" ⁴...**"God has heard your prayers. He has seen that you give to the poor, and he remembers you.**] Result Gentile Pentecost. It's not easy living the Christian life. Sometimes it's costly but we should feel good about what we did and smile because it motivates us to do more for Christ.

C. (3) As we look at the past, ask God to forgive us for what we did wrong or the good we failed to do, and repent/ change. God loves us in spite of our sin. He wants to forgive us and help us get on the right path. [1 John 1:9 (NLT) But if we **confess our sins to him**, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.] Change's we need to make in 2024, [Luke 3:8–14 (NLT) **Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God...**¹⁰ The crowds asked, "What should we do?" ¹¹ John replied...If you have food, share it with those who are hungry."...¹⁴ "What should we do?" asked some soldiers. John replied, "Don't extort money or make false accusations...] being a Christian is believing and acting the right way.

1. Don't let satan condemn you for past mistakes. [Ro. 8:1 (ESV) There is therefore now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.] Satan wants us to feel bad and unworthy; the HS points us to the cross for forgiveness and a new start
2. Yesterday/ the past is over. We can't go back and change it, but we can celebrate the good and change what needs to be changed.

III. Today...a look at the present. (Focus on how we should start each day?)

- A. Start each day with God and ask Him what He wants you to do today.
1. Start our day with God.
 - a. Get out of bed and commit our day to Him.
 - b. Get up a little early and take some time to be with God in Bible reading and prayer. If you're running late pray in the car.
 2. Ask the Lord what He wants you to do today? (Often answered by thoughts while praying) Some good works are planned, and some are spontaneous. E.g. make a hospital visit, prayer reminder, or reach out and encourage someone struggling. When we offer our day to God, we present ourselves for His service in planned and unplanned opportunities.
 3. Why is it important to start our day this way? The question is motivated by an attitude all mature Christians should have., [Matthew 6:9–10 (NLT) **Pray like this:** Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰ **May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth,** as it is in heaven.] Next, daily bread. Before we pray for our needs, we are 1st mindful of God's Kingdom.
 4. ***If we live each day like this, when today becomes yesterday we can know the Lord will one day say to us, 'well done'.

IV. Tomorrow...a look at the future...the rest of my life

- A. What is God calling me to be or do in the future? This applies to us if we're 8, 18 or 80. Premise: God has a perfect plan for our life. We'll be the most successful and fulfilled when we're doing it. [Psalm 139:16 (NCV) you saw my body as it was formed. **All the days planned for me were written in your book before I was one day old.**] God has a plan/ pathway to follow for our best life. Following God's plan for our life gives us a great sense of fulfillment and happiness. E.g., me turning point @22, what to do with my life? That was a life calling but I still do this today, e.g., 2024 priorities for church, what my future ministry will look like @ 70, 75, 80...
1. So, what's God's plan for your future? If you know it, do it. If you don't, take some quiet time and talk to God about your future. Ask Him to show you. [Ps. 37:23 (NLT) The **Lord directs** the steps of the godly. He delights in **every detail** of their lives.]
- B. We can face tomorrow with faith in God, not worry and fear. Context worry future, [Mt. 6:30–33 (NLT) ... Why do you have **so little faith?** ³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things **dominate** the thoughts of unbelievers,

but **your heavenly Father already knows all your needs.** ³³ **Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.**

- V. Conclusion: Forever... Title: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, and Forever
- A. [Ephesians 3:21 (ESV) to him (*Jesus*) be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, **forever and ever, (*KJV world without end*) Amen.**] [Daniel 7:18 (ESV) But the **saints of the Most High** shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom **forever, forever and ever.**']
1. Everything on earth has a beginning and an end. Yesterday, my brother, my sister and I went running to see what Santa brought on Christmas morning. I blinked and I had 3 kids running down the stairs in MS. on Christmas morning. I blinked again and this Christmas LaNell and I were all alone because my kids have their own families. That's the way life on this earth is but Jesus offers us eternal life in a real place called heaven, forever and ever, a world without end, even life after death. That's why we need to live today and tomorrow with eternity in mind.
 2. The quick and uncertain passage of time is why we should pause and reflect on our life as the New Year begins and decide to live the rest of our life in a way that pleases God. If we live like this today and tomorrow, forever will be beyond our wildest dreams. [1 Corinthians 2:9 (NLT)... "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."]

VI. Response

A. Prayer: Decision to live to please God, today and tomorrow.

B. Souls: Starting place, believe in Jesus and decide to turn to God and follow Jesus.

VII. Bibliography/ Resources: Logos Bible Software and Library, Platinum Edition, was used to prepare this message.

VIII. Supplemental Material

A. [Malachi 3:16 (ESV) Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and **a book of remembrance** was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name.]

B. Daniel 12:1–3 (NLT) "At that time Michael, the archangel who stands guard over your nation, will arise. Then there will be a time of anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence. But at that time every one of your people whose name is written in the book will be

rescued.² Many of those whose bodies lie dead and buried will rise up, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting disgrace.³ Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.

C. Revelation 22:1–5 (NLT) Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.² It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.³ No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him.⁴ And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads.⁵ And there will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. And they will reign forever and ever.