

HOW TO DIE IN YOUR SIN

John 8:21-30

1 February 2015

[Note: Preaching is a live event where God meets with His people, and that cannot be reproduced or duplicated. It is unique every time, and indispensable in the life of the Christian and the church. This is not a complete transcript; it is typically about 80% of the actual sermon. Some common abbreviations in these notes are: "NB" = *nota bene*, "note well" / "+" = an illustration / "[X]" = an application / "BTW" = By the way / "Cf." = cross-reference / "i.e." = In other words / "b/c" = because / "E.G." = for example.]

Turn back to John 8, looking today at vv. 21-30...

Give title...

How many times, if ever, have you said to someone, "you will die in your sin"? – Ever had anyone look you in the eye and say that to you: "you will die in your sin"?

That's exactly what our Lord does here in our text [this AM] – not once, not twice, but 3x, He says to His enemies: "you will die in your sin".

Just hearing the first three words in that phrase is jolting and jarring enough: "You will die". – Yet there is no denying it. –

Beloved, you may defy gravity, but you will not defy the grave. Nobody ever had to ask, 'Is there death after life?'

From the moment you are born, you have begun your march toward the cemetery. – It's been said, 'All the world is a hospital and every person in it a terminal patient'. – Death is one of the most certain facts in life.

[+ HOW would you respond if the Dr. told you tomorrow, 'Get your affairs in order, you have 1 mo. to live'? – Yet the fact is, you are not promised 1 more day (Prov. 27:1; Jam. 4; Lk. 12). – People who once sat in the same seats as you, lived in the same homes, drove on the same roads, visited the same shops, are now gone from this world, forever, never to return. – And you think you'll be the exception?]

But NB, Jesus didn't just say to His enemies, "You will die". – He said something far, far worse. – He wasn't just stating a universal truth. – He was giving a very specific warning.

Jesus said, "you will die in your sin". – It's those last three words that are so terrible, not the first three.

Will you die? – No question. – Will you die in your sin? – Big question. –

Your mortality? – Guaranteed. – Your destiny? – Hangs in the balance. – Will it be the glories of Heaven, or will it be the torments of Hell? (ecstasy vs. agony) –

It all depends on what you do with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible clearly shows us there are only two ways to live – God's way, or man's way – darkness vs light, right vs wrong. –

Two ways to live, and therefore only *two ways to die*, as Christ is about to show us here: Either dying “in your sin”, or forgiven of your sin – condemned vs justified, guilty vs acquitted, damned or saved.

☒ Beloved, WHICH way will you die? – How will you exit this world? No question is of more paramount importance. –

Name one other day that you should prepare for *more* than the day of your death. – Every other day you have ever prepared for: every birthday, wedding day, due date, anniversary, or retirement day, etc – all those days *combined* pale into insignificance compared to what happens on the day you die.

All of life is a preparation for death. – And the more prepared you are for death, the more prepared you are for life too.

~ Someone has said, “It is never too soon to make friends with death”. – Another has said, ‘When death comes, have nothing else left to do but to die.’ (Henry Law)

It’s no surprise then that our Lord seeks to prepare us and equip us to face death, through clear instruction & direct teaching like this.

Stand, Read & Pray: often pray either 1:14,16, or 20:31...

****FOUR WAYS to make sure you die in your sin: (to guarantee that you miss out on Heaven and land up in Hell)***

1. vv. 21-22, DELAY

v. 21 – Sound familiar? – 7:33-34...

I.e., (v. 21a), Jesus is saying to the Jews, ‘Your quest for Messiah will carry on after I die. You will keep watching & waiting & searching for a Saviour to deliver you.

‘But you will search in vain. Messiah cannot come and will not come, because He already came. I am He.

‘You rejected the only Saviour God sent. God has no other; the world needs no other. I am He.’

☒ Beloved, let this sink in: You can search for God in vain. – He is not always ‘there for you’. – A time comes when He cannot be found and is no longer near. – People can seek after Christ in vain, when it’s too late. – Jesus said, “You will seek Me and will NOT find Me” (7:34).

E.G., during a crisis, after traumatic experiences – ‘no atheists in a foxhole’, people may suddenly get real spiritual & serious about God.... –

But if that doesn’t come from a true work of God’s Spirit, from a heart broken over sin and ready truly to repent & believe, then they will seek Christ in vain. – They will not find Him. –

They may find new friends, or church attendance, or religion, or Christianity. – But they have not found Christ, they do not truly know Him.

Repeat: v. 21...

v. 21c – I.e., God will say to Jesus' enemies, 'You are not welcome in My house, My Heaven. You reject My Son, you reject Me. Get out.'

☒ Are deathbed conversions possible?! – Absolutely! – Look at the thief on the cross who turned to Christ and got saved. – I've preached to many people on their deathbed, and will keep doing so.

But remember the old saying: *True repentance is never too late; but late repentance is seldom true.* –

There was one dying thief saved, so that none will despair. – But there was only one, so that none will presume.

I.e., Don't assume you can get saved later. – Later may never come. – Sin has a hardening and enslaving effect. – Your heart does not grow softer over time. – Unbelief puts down long roots.

The Bible says, "Today is the day of salvation!" – The prophet Isaiah cries out, "Seek the Lord while He may be found, call on Him while He is near", before it is too late.

Repeat: v. 21...

v. 22 – I.e., 'Good riddance, this pest from Nazareth! Is He going to spare us the trouble and kill Himself for us?'

And, 'Since we know we're headed for Heaven (as circumcised sons of Abraham!!), Jesus must be going to... where else, but Hell!'

2. v. 23, LOVE THE WORLD

v. 23 – Jesus is saying to these Pharisees, 'The contrast could not be greater. What divides us is not just where we are going, but WHO we are.'

'What separates us is not just our destiny then, but our identity NOW, already, as citizens of two opposite kingdoms, members of two opposite families, servants of two very different masters.'

On the one hand: Jesus, "from above...not of this world" = Sent by the Father, Darling of Heaven, pre-existing Word, eternal Son of God. –

Thus, this fallen world has no claim on Jesus. – Jesus is perfectly "in the world, but not of it". –

This darkened, cursed humanity, on the broad road to destruction, blinded by unbelief, bound by Satan, enslaved to sin – this worldly domain has no sway over Jesus whatsoever.

On the other hand: You enemies of Christ, “you are from below...you are of this world” – I.e., this world owns you. You do its will, not the Father’s will. You sing its song, worship its idols, invest in its priorities, chase after its dreams.

‘You are earthbound to the core. It’s all you live for. You are blind to eternal, spiritual, heavenly realities. You refuse to think beyond the here and now.

‘All that matters to you are the passing pleasures of this life. You give no thought to what will truly last. Never do you stop and think, ‘In 100 billion years from now, what will really matter?’ (Back to [8:15a](#) from last time.)

Repeat: [v. 23](#)...

No wonder then that they rejected Christ. – He was a threat to their earthbound agenda, an interruption to their worldly pursuits, a Light that shone uncomfortably into their pit of darkness, exposing the sin they so loved.

+ Remember when Peter pulled Jesus aside and tried to rebuke Him after Jesus’ announced He must suffer & be crucified? – Mk 8. How did Jesus respond? – [Mk. 8:33](#), “Get behind me, Satan; for you are not setting your mind on God’s interests (the things of God), but man’s (the things of man)?

☒ How about you & me? – Do we also deserve this rebuke from Jesus?...

WHERE are you from? – Are you OF or *not of* this world? – Those who know you best – what would they say you lived for? –

What dominates your thinking & governs your priorities – temporal things or eternal? – The ‘above’ world, or merely the ‘below’ world?...

See [John 15:19](#)...

Turn to (or read): [Php. 3:19-20](#)... [Col. 3:1-2](#)... (Cf. Rom. 8:5ff, mindset is everything!, back to worldview again!)

☒ Worldly Christian, beware! – [1 Jn. 2:15-17](#); [Jam. 4:4](#)...

~ This is the unconverted world. – As one preacher describes: *This world is hostile to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible, Christians. – Hostile to godliness, promoting materialism, humanism, illicit sex, carnal ambition, pride, greed, self!*

The world’s opinions are wrong, its aims are selfish, its pleasures are sinful, its influence is demoralizing, its politics corrupt, its honor empty, its smiles fake and its love fickle.

WHY then would we love it?!...

☒ And WHY then would we ever be yoked with this world? – 2 Cor. 6:14-17a...

Never should a Christian marry an unbeliever, or find your deepest friendships, strongest ties, and warmest camaraderie with the lost instead of the saved....

☒ Beloved, God calls us aliens, pilgrims, sojourners in this world, far from our heavenly home, aching for the Celestial City to come! (1 Pet. 1 & 2; Heb. 10-11, etc.)...

(O that we learn to think & live more Heavenward! O that we could, as it were, hear the rustle of angel's wings, see the gleaming streets of gold, gaze on that emerald sea! ...Like that old Puritan, 'Heaven was in him before he was in Heaven.')

3. v. 24, IGNORE CHRIST

+ Years ago, a sad letter to the editor of a Melbourne newspaper (in Aus.):

After hearing Billy Graham and viewing him on television and seeing reports and letters concerning his mission here, I am heartily sick of the type of religion that insists my soul and everyone else's need saving, whatever that means.

I have never felt that I was lost nor do I feel that I daily wallow in the mire of sin although repetitious preaching insists that I do. Give me a practical religion that teaches gentleness and tolerance that acknowledges no barriers of color or creed, that remembers the aged and teaches children goodness and not sin.

If in order to save my soul, I must accept such a philosophy as I have recently heard preach, I prefer to remain forever damned. –

Sadly, when he died, he got his wish.

v. 24 – Jesus could not have put it more strongly. – On matters of most grave consequence, Jesus speaks with the greatest authority & clarity.

NB, v. 21, “sin” singular. – Here, “sins” plural. – WHY the difference? – Seems to be a matter of root & fruit, cause & effect. – What is the root sin beneath all sins? – Unbelief. –

But unbelief is the mother to a million other sins. – Unbelief is never barren; it always has wicked offspring, it fathers a whole host of evils.

YET Jesus speaks here to the men who thought they were most righteous, LEAST likely to die in their sins. – Pagan Gentiles would die in their sins. – Illiterate Jews and lowly commoners might die in their sins. –

But not the Pharisees, not the temple clergy! – All of their learning, all of their piety, all of their religion surely secured them a front row seat next to Father Abraham in glory. –

Or so they thought. – Until Jesus spoke stinging words like these:

Repeat v. 24...

☒ Better to die a thousand deaths physically, than to die once “in your sins”! – Better to die any other death than this one. – [Better to die the most miserable death imaginable – by

torture, impaling, fire, or being drawn & quartered – anything, rather than to “die in your sins”], but as a Christian!

WHY? – Because for the child of God, all physical pain is temporal, it cannot continue after death, it must cease. – As the Apostle Paul declared, for the Christian, “To die is gain”, Php. 1:21. The best thing that could ever happen to you is to die!

WHY is death such a release and a hope for the believer? – Because you have already died to sin before you die. – Sin’s power and mastery over you is slain already, Rom. 6. –

And sin’s penalty was paid at Calvary by Christ’s once-for-all sacrifice. – “It is finished”, Jesus cried, ‘Paid in full’. – So when our day comes for dying, we can face the Judge without fear. –

Because He has now become our Father instead – He has saved us and adopted us forever. – He is eager to welcome us home!

☒ But oh, for the unsaved man or woman – how drastically different is their fate. – They live in their sins, they die in their sins, they enter Hell covered with sin. –

And they will one day rise again, still in their sins. – And they will stand before the Judge in their sins. –

Because of that, they will be sentenced to the Lake of Fire, with their sins.

WHY is there such gnashing of teeth and endless wailing and moaning in Hell? – Why does the wrath of God never cease to burn against His enemies, for all eternity? – Because they are still “in their sins”. –

They are tormented by the pangs of a fully informed conscience, the agony of eternal regret over wasted opportunity and rejecting Jesus before it was too late. – Their fate is now sealed forever, they are still “in their sins”.

If they could but be rid of their sins, all punishment would cease, their souls could be spared. – But Scripture says, “the soul that sins must die”, and, “the wages of sin is death”. – And so forever and ever, for a billion years times a billion, they will keep dying “in their sins”.

Repeat: v. 24...

☒ But you do NOT have to die in your sins! – There is yet hope, all wrapped up in this one six-letter word: v. 24b, “UNLESS”....

There is one escape route out of the burning house, one parachute to jump from the fateful plane, one rescue boat to save you from drowning in your sins. –

Your good works cannot rescue you. – Neither can the good works of others. – Your godly parents and grandparents, your good church, your pastor or priest, rabbi or guru – these cannot save you.

Your sincerity, your religion, your morality, your decency – these cannot save you. –

Your healthy marriage, your upright family, your Bible knowledge, your church attendance – these cannot save you either.

Repeat: v. 24b....

+ Today's creed, 'Justification by Death Alone'!! – To get to Heaven, all you have to die. – You go to funerals today, you listen to people speak of the deceased, and there is this one great assumption:

Everyone who dies goes to Heaven. – That's all it takes, you just have to die!

Not so says the Bible. – Not so says the Lord Jesus Christ. – In fact, the opposite is true. –

All you have to do to get to Hell is to die. – Do nothing about your sin, love your sin, live in your sin, and die in your sin, and you get instant Hell.

☒ "UNLESS" you believe in Christ. – That is the only way to be freed from your sin. – You must turn to the Sin-bearer, you must have a Substitute for your sin, One who takes the punishment for you....

But that One must be able to pay sin's full price demanded by an infinitely holy God and righteous Lawgiver. –

The One you trust in to save you – He must be both fully God and fully man, or His payment will not suffice, and you will still die in your sins.

NB, "I Am"! – The "He" is added by translators (NASB, ESV; NIV, "the One I claim to be" = 8:12 last week, Exod 3 & 6, "I AM", etc...

*There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin;
He only could unlock the gate of Heaven, and let us in.*

☒ What will YOU do with this Man Jesus? – Your eternal destiny comes down your decision about one Person. –

The only way to be freed from your sins is by believing in the Son of God. – The only way to avoid dying and going to Hell forever in an unforgiven condition is this: Putting an active, personal, ongoing, saving trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, the great I AM.

☒ This is WHY we Christians, and any healthy church, cannot stop talking about Him and preaching Him (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12, etc.)!...

[NOT the Christ of the JWs or the Mormons, who is not the Son of God. – NOT the Christ of Roman Catholicism, re-sacrificed in the Mass every time, sharing with Mary in saving sinners. – NOT the Christ of the prosperity gospel who only came to bring earthly wealth, not eternal salvation....]

[+ Paul's closing argument this Saturday in Muslim debate, expecting some 600 in hall in Louis Trichardt! – 'You Muslims claim to believe in *Isa*, but you reject His own claims about Himself. So you will die in your sins, unless...!']

[+ One indicator that you are saved: the kind of prayers you pray. – Are they generic Deist prayers?... Or are they distinctly Christian prayers?, Christ-centred, cross-saturated?....

Beware of Christless prayers, Christless morality, Christless Christianity!.. (repeat v. 24?)]

4. vv. 25-29, PLUG YOUR EARS

v. 25a – This is even more scornful in the original: "You, who are you (to be saying such things)?! Claiming to be THE Light of the world, able to testify about yourself, telling us we will die in our sins unless we believe You are the great I AM? Who are You?!"

☒ Beware: Know what happens if you die in this state, still saying to Jesus, 'Who are you??' – When you stand before Him, He will return the favour. – He will say to you, 'Who are you? Depart from Me, I never knew you.'

v. 25b – I.e., 'Have you heard a word I've said? My claims to be the Son of God – this is nothing new – it's what I've been saying all along.'

vv. 26-27 – Again, Jesus reiterates His mission: 'I'm not cooking this up. I have to say some very hard things to you who reject Me. But these things don't originate in Me. I am only relaying the message from God the Father. If you don't like what I say, talk to Him!'

v. 28a – At last, the day will come when you finally stop saying, 'Who are You?' – A day is coming when you will discover exactly who I am. –

And it will come at the time you would least expect. – NOT when I am wearing a crown, but a cross. – Not when I am at my best, but when I look the worst. – Not in strength & triumph, but in weakness & defeat.

This is John's constant theme: Here is how the Son of God would be glorified, lifted up & exalted – by being crucified! (cf. 3:14-15; 12:32) –

John learned this from a great teacher – the prophet Isaiah, Isa. 53:

Behold, My Servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you...so His appearance was marred more than any man...

He was pierced through for our transgression, crushed for our iniquities...oppressed and afflicted, like a lamb led to slaughter. ...the LORD was pleased to crush Him...as a guilt offering.

...Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, and He will divide the booty with the strong.

Catch the irony in what Jesus is telling His enemies here:

'The day is about to come where you will think you've finally gotten rid of Me. But in fact, you will only have promoted Me. What you devise as My downfall will become My uprising. What you intend for evil, God intends for good.

As your own OT declares, "The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." (Ps. 118)

'After I have been slain for sinners, and after I rise on the 3rd day – some of you will be saved at Pentecost. Then "you will know that I AM"....

But most of you will only realise that I AM when you die and when I return to judge. – Then, and only then, will the truth dawn on you, with a terrible realisation....

+ Oh that someone here this morning would see the cross of Jesus with new eyes – like that Roman centurion in Mark 15. – After 15 chps of Mark's Gospel, he is the first person on earth to realise who Jesus truly is – BY watching how He died, as no man had ever died:

Not just being killed, but laying down His live willingly. – The innocent for the guilty, the sinless for sinners. –

Not by losing His live, but giving up His life, for the undeserving. – What grace, what love, what a Saviour! (as we're about to celebrate at Communion)

*Lifted up was He to die
It is finished was His cry
Now in Heaven exalted high
Hallelujah, what a Savior!*

[+ NO other religion in the world offers a Saviour from sin: Islam offers a Prophet and his laws. – The religions of the East offer wise teachers. – Atheism & secularism in the West offer self and greed. But only Christianity offers a Saviour, a real atoning sacrifice for sin!....]

vv. 28b-29 – In Christianity, we believe not in a lonely, solo God, but in a Triune Godhead – a God who has eternally existed in community, not in isolation.

4x now just in this chp, "sent": vv. 16, 18, 26, 29...

This enormously important theme in John – that Jesus acts ever & always as the faithful Son, the perfectly obedient Son, the divine Son.

[☒] Friend, what have you done with the Son God has sent? – The Almighty Creator, Maker of Heaven & Earth, has gift-wrapped His only Son (God Himself too!) and sent Him to earth, for you. – What have you done with God's gift?!...]

NB, v. 29, Jesus had such a profound sense of His Father's presence – AND of His Father's pleasure – at all times.

HOW MUCH more shocking then was the cross – then, and only then, to be abandoned by His Father, as Jesus bore our sin....

v. 30 – Oh that this would happen today. – If it could happen there on that day in the temple (amid such hostility & hatred), God can do it anywhere!

☒ Have you taken your stand with Jesus, and against His enemies?...

CONCL. – Repeat outline...

+ Michelle's comment the other day about our two different friends – both are Christians, and both had an unsaved loved one commit suicide. – But their reactions were opposite, one so biblical, one so unbiblical....

☒ Scripture gives no 3rd option, no other alternative: EITHER you die “in your sins” or you die “in the Lord”. – Either you die without hope, or you die in hope; outside of Christ, or “in Christ”.

+ Here's what it looks like to die “in your sins”, unforgiven: Somerset Maugham, famous British author in the 20th c., had all the world could offer, but hated God. –

In his final days, Maugham was an empty, bitter old man. – On his bed, he would fall into shrieking terrors, crying out, “Go away! I'm not ready.... I'm not dead yet... I'm not dead yet, I tell you!”

+ Here's what it looks like to die “in the Lord”, forgiven of all sin because of faith in Christ: Isaac Watts, the great hymnwriter, on the day he died:

“It is a great mercy that I have no manner of fear or dread of death. I could, if God please, lay my head back and die without terror this afternoon.” – And he did.

Repeat: v. 24...

PRAY