

John 8:21-30

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[0:00] He has to have this eternal destiny in mind. In John chapter 17, in verse 3, Jesus defines eternal life this way. Their part is that they would be with God forever.

They thought that they were pleasers of God, and yet the opposite was true. Whatever you can imagine might be most horrific about hell, the worst thing will be exclusion from the place where God resides.

I earnestly hope that you do not want to die in your sin. It is possible this morning that you just don't really care.

It's possible that you love your sin. And I just want you to know that this is not a good position to stand in. Your eternal destiny matters.

You should not want to die in your sin. You should want to die clothed in the righteousness of Christ. You should long for eternal life.

[1:26] I hope that if someone were to tell you how to avoid a temporal and eternal life of misery, that you would at least grant them a moment of your time, a bit of your attention.

Will you give me just some moments? Hear the words that the scripture says. What the Bible has to say about your eternal destiny has the potential to change your life forever.

Our outline for this text is going to follow John MacArthur's because I just thought it was so clever. He often is. This one especially so. He titled the chapter on these verses in his commentary, How to Die in Your Sins.

So the first way to die in your sins. How to die in your sins. Number one. Be self-righteous. Verse 22.

We note the response of the Jews. They say, Will he kill himself? Since he says, Where I am going, you cannot come.

[2:44] The religious leaders of Jesus' day were so confident in their righteousness that they assumed heaven was their destination. Jesus is saying, I'm going to a different place than you're going.

And they so assumed they were going to heaven. They ask sarcastically, Will he kill himself? Suggesting that where he was going was hell.

You see, the Jews had strong opinions about suicide. The first century Jewish historian Josephus wrote, Quote, The souls of those whose hands have acted madly against themselves are received by the darkest places in Hades.

End quote. You have to understand that to see what they're doing as they respond in this way. Will he kill himself? Will he send himself to hell? Because clearly, He won't be where we are by his own proclamation.

They're being smug. They can't imagine Jesus going to heaven and that they won't be there. It's not possible. Self-righteousness is a deadly deception.

[3:59] Do you want to die in your sin? Go on believing that you're good enough. That somehow in your estimation, you've tallied more marks on the good side than on the bad side.

Think that somehow God owes you something because you tried. Proverbs 30 and verse 12 says, There are those who are clean in their own eyes, but are not washed of their filth.

Humility, rather, marks the saved. Those who have repented of their sin and turned to Christ. Jesus says in Matthew 5, verse 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Those who recognize their spiritual need, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You want to die in your sin?

Be self-righteous. Isn't it a great irony that the men who had already decided to murder Jesus, which decision had been made in previous chapters, that they suggest that he may take his own life and not inhabit the same place as them?

[5:20] How self-righteous to think that the murder of an innocent man would gain them reward and find them in a different place than he. Secondly, how to die in your sins?

Be worldly. Verse 23, he said to them, You are from below. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. As Jesus points out his opponent's different destination in verse 22, here he points out their different origin.

The concept being presented by the word world is an important one. Jesus is not referring here to the material world, but to the immaterial, spiritual realm that opposes the kingdom of God, the system of this world.

I thought this paragraph from John MacArthur summed this very well. He says, Materialism, humanism, immorality, pride, and selfishness. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, 1 John 2.16, are the world's hallmarks.

[6:40] It is utterly opposed to divine truth, righteousness, virtue, and holiness. Its opinions are wrong. Its aims are selfish. Its pleasures are sinful.

Its influences are demoralizing. Its politics are corrupt. Its honors are empty. Its smiles are phony. Its love is false and fickle.

End quote. The starting point of the Jews' animosity towards Jesus is the fact that they are part of the world.

They walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work, and the sons of disobedience, Ephesians 2.

2. This is why Jesus calls Satan their father. Do you want to die in your sin? Love this world.

[7:41] Love the system that functions here. Excuse me. Listen to its falsehoods. Believe that you are at the center of the universe, that your emotions and whims define the truth, that you can outwit God.

Instead, we have to humble ourselves and submit ourselves to God's word. Third way to die in your sins.

Be unbelieving. How to die in your sins. Number three. Be unbelieving. Verse 24.

Jesus says, I told you that you would die in your sins. For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

For those of you who care and have been keeping up, I think this is the chiasmic center of this text. Although, Jim Hamilton disagrees. And that was hard for me this week.

[8:44] Maybe we can talk about it later. I told you you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

Unless you believe that I am he. Isn't that an interesting phrase? What specifically does the pronoun he refer to?

What's it referring back to? I want to tell you, my punchy response was to go back up the text and start looking. What does he mean when he's referring to the he? Well, the pronoun he is not in the original Greek text.

It would be better to render the phrase unless you believe that I am. He's declaring himself to be deity.

It's not the first time that he's done this. So if you want to include the pronoun, I think he's going all the way back to what he said in John chapter 5, verse 17 and 18.

[9:54] You may remember, this is where some of this kicked off. He said, my father is working until now and I am working. And then verse 18 says this. This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him.

Right? There's their plan. Why? Because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, you remember he healed a man at the Pool of Siloam, but he was even calling God his own father, making himself equal with God.

That is exactly what he's doing here. He is declaring that he is the I Am. The self-existent one. Yahweh. Later in verse 28, he's going to refer to himself as the son of man.

The book of Daniel. The one who will reign at the father's right hand over the nations. He is unequivocally doing that very thing.

The thing that they're so mad at him for doing, that is exactly what he is doing. And he says, unless you believe that I am, you will die in your sins.

[11:08] Jesus is either a liar, he's a lunatic, or he is who he says he is.

Do you want to die in your sin? Dismiss Jesus as maniacal or as a madman. Dismiss him as that. or humbly receive him as the great I am. The fourth way to die in your sins is to be willfully ignorant. Look at their response in verse 25. They said to him, who are you? Jesus said to them, just what I have been telling you from the beginning.

It's like they want to have a point of contention with him here, and yet he has already explained to them who he is. They already had the data to believe that he is the I am.

[12:20] To have the forgiveness of their sins, and yet they willfully ignore him. I want to be brief here.

I just want to note it, just for the sake of our time. They've had enough to place their faith in Christ. They could have approached him as Nicodemus did, unsure and curious.

They could have asked him honest questions. They could have said, these claims you're making are massive claims. You're claiming to be God. Tell us more. But this is not their approach to him at all.

They are positioning to have him killed. They are happy to remain just as they are. Self-righteous, self-deluded, unbelieving, worldly, sitting in positions of power, trying to play a political game with Rome.

They're so happy to see him off the scene. They want to get rid of Jesus as a nuisance to what they have going on.

[13:37] Do you want to die in your sin? Ignore everything you have ever heard about Jesus. Most of you, I would assume, have grown up hearing about Jesus.

If nothing else, you've heard about him. I'll tell you more here in just a moment. You want to die in your sin? Ignore everything that I'm going to say to you today.

But notice the final verse of our text. I'm grateful for verse 30. It says, as he was saying these things, many believed saved in him.

For those of you who have not placed saving faith in Jesus Christ, what if you don't want to die in your sin?

What must you do? Or to state it better, what must you believe to be saved? the Bible gives us a clear and gracious answer.

[14:45] Zoom back a bit from it. It begins with God himself. The scripture tells us that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

He's over the universe and he is perfectly holy in his character. The prophet Isaiah records the angels declaring before him, holy, holy, holy, that thrice repetition, perfectly holy, is the Lord of hosts.

The whole earth is full of his glory. That's Isaiah 6 verse 3. Because God is holy, set apart, and he is righteous, he cannot ignore rebellion.

He cannot dismiss sin. He cannot be in fellowship with rebels to his will. His justice requires that evil be judged, and every human being stands accountable before him.

The Bible tells us that humanity has rebelled against this holy God. It starts in Genesis chapter 3 and it carries on to this day.

[16:03] Though we were created to know him and live under his good rule, we have all turned away. Scripture says, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 3 23. Every one of us guilty before him. Sin is not just some weakness or failure, some minor deficiency.

It's rebellion. It's declaring God our enemy, the one who created us. calling him no longer our God, our creator, but that is set against us.

Each of us has broken God's law in thought, in word, in deed. And because of this rebellion, the Bible says the wages of sin is death.

Romans 6 23. Death now, death forevermore, eternal separation from God. Sin leads to physical death and ultimately to eternal death.

[17:06] Left to ourselves, we cannot right this wrong. No amount of moral effort or religious activity can remove the guilt of our sin.

But the good news of the gospel is that God has acted to save sinners. In his great love, he has sent his son Jesus Christ into the world.

The apostle Paul writes, but God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5 8. Jesus lived the perfectly righteous life that we have failed to live, and then he willingly went to the cross to bear the penalty of our sin.

As the apostle Peter explains, he himself bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. 1 Peter 2 and verse 24.

After his crucifixion, Jesus raised from the dead on the third day, demonstrating that his sacrifice was accepted and that he has conquered sin and death forever.

[18:15] God The Bible calls every person to respond to this good news. Jesus himself proclaimed, the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand.

Repent and believe in the gospel. Mark 1 15. To repent means to turn away from sin, to change your mind. This is no longer the trajectory I want to be on.

I want to go a different way. I'm not going to live for myself. I want to live for God. To believe means to place your trust in Jesus Christ alone, relying on his life, his death and resurrection as the only basis for our forgiveness and acceptance before God.

I used to use an analogy with my boys, which I stole from somebody, I'm sure, that we put on Jesus like a parachute and we jump out the plane. We believe he will catch us and we will, not die.

We used to practice jumping out of the plane off our couch. We put on backpacks and jump off the plane. That's what it means to believe. We hold on to him. The promise of scripture is clear. If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

[19:31] Romans 10, 9. Salvation is not something we earn by religious effort. Instead, by grace, you have been saved through faith. This is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2, 8 and 9. So what must you believe to be saved? You must believe that God is the holy creator, that you are a sinner in need of forgiveness, that Jesus Christ died and rose again to save sinners, and that you must repent and trust in him alone for salvation.

salvation. The Bible gives this gracious promise to all who respond in faith. Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 10, 13. If you don't want to die in your sin, repent and believe that Jesus is the Christ.

for those of you who have placed saving faith in Jesus Christ. Don't forget the gospel for you. Once again, we should never grow tired of hearing it.

[20:39] It's a glorious thing. We should be reminded of who we once were and now who we are in Jesus. Never grow cold, never grow tired of hearing this glorious thing.

And secondly, don't forget the gospel for others. God is saving a people for his glory. We want to have God's glory magnified and we want to be part of his saving work in the world.

So preach the gospel to anyone who will listen to you, to your children in your home, to your neighbors, to your coworkers, to your extended family members.

Follow a simple outline. It's what I just presented for you. God, man, Christ, response. It's not difficult to have conversations about things that you love.

It's easy to get into this conversation, particularly at the man point. Everybody's got problems.

Everybody experiences trouble in this world. Talk about the fallence of the world and then back them up to God, walk through man, show them Christ, ask them to respond.

[21:51] It's not a hard thing to do. Just do it. Be faithful to proclaim the gospel. Pray that God will use your gospel proclamation to save souls.

You will not logic anybody into heaven. It's not going to happen. Declare the gospel to them. I'm not anti-apologetics.

We see Paul reasoning with people day by day. But it is not the primary thing that should be done. Help people put down their guard, lower their fists, preach the gospel to them.

Take them back to their sinful state. Show them their need of justification. Present to them Jesus. Charles Spurgeon once said, and this is in your bulletin if you care to read it, a great many learned men are defending the gospel.

No doubt it is a very proper and right thing to do. Yet I always notice that when there are most books of that kind, it is because the gospel itself is not being preached.

[23:01] Stop it there for a second. You hear what he's saying? When we're spending all of our time making apologetic arguments for it, Spurgeon says it's because it's just not being preached.

I'll pick back up. Suppose a number of persons were to take it into their heads that they had to defend a lion, a full-grown king of beasts. There he is in the cage, and here come all the soldiers of the army to fight for him.

Well, I should suggest to them, if they would not object and feel that it was humbling to them, that they should kindly stand back and open the door and let the lion out.

I believe that would be the best way of defending him, for he would take care of himself. Let's pray together.