Four Ways to Miss Heaven
John 8:21-30
80-167

As we come to a time when we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table, we are always reminded of the fact that Scripture says to examine ourselves. And that examination has to start at a very foundational point and that is at the very point of whether or not we know the Lord Jesus Christ. At the end of Paul's letter to the Corinthians called 2 Corinthians, he says, "Test yourselves, to see if you are in the faith - " examine yourselves " - Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you fail the test?"

Certainly self-examination when you come to the Lord's Table starts with an examination of your spiritual condition before God. Do you really know Jesus Christ? Have you really put your trust and faith in Him? That's the starting point.

And we cannot be under any illusion about the fact that because someone is in a church, or even attends frequently, or even regularly that they therefore are Christians. We must rather assume that in a congregation like this there are perhaps many who have not put their trust in Jesus Christ. For them, this Table is really to partake of judgment should they participate. Paul says if you don't examine yourself, you might bring judgment upon yourself by partaking.

To celebrate the death of Christ in the taking of the bread and the cup, one would need to know Christ, to have come to Him for salvation, and then to have confessed all known sin, and ask for cleansing and purity of heart so that there is nothing between you and Christ. But all of that begins at the point of salvation. And I continue to be made aware of the fact through the years as ministry goes on and on how many people come to church - even this church - and don't come to Christ for weeks, and months, and sometimes even years.

So I thought that this morning I was going to do what the Spirit of God, I'm sure, compelled me to do this week as I was studying through the gospel of John in great detail. And that is to address the matter of actually believing in the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation.

I want you to turn in your Bible to the 8th chapter of John, the 8th chapter of John. We've all heard the expression, "He has nobody to blame but himself." That is a biblical expression. It is an expression that the Spirit of God makes a number of times in Scripture with regard to the sinner. If you perish in your sin, you have no one to blame but yourself. And no passage makes this more poignant or clear than the 8th chapter of John. John chapter 8, I want to start reading in verse 21.

"He said therefore again to them, 'I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.' Therefore the Jews were saying, 'Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, "Where I am going, you cannot come"?' And He was saying to them, 'You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. I said therefore to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.'

“So they were saying to Him, ‘Who are You?’ Jesus said to them, ‘What have I been saying to you from the beginning? I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.’

“They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. Jesus therefore said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.’ As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.”

In the 8 chapters up to this point of John’s gospel, John has been dealing with the self-manifestations of Jesus, which gave to Israel sufficient evidence to prove that He was the Messiah and the Son of God. In fact, sufficient evidence for them to believe in Him unto salvation. And wherever there was a willingness to believe, there was plenty of evidence. In the mind of Jesus, anyone seeing what He did, hearing what He said, experiencing Him and all of those things that went in around Him and not believing, bore the guilt of that unbelief because the revelation was sufficient to make unbelief inexcusable.

In Galilee, for example, where the ministry of Jesus began, Galilee in the north part of the land of Israel, Jesus went about doing miracles, miracles of healing, by which He demonstrated that He was God because He had total control over the natural world. And only God could exercise such control. He also went around casting out demons, demonstrating that He had total control over the supernatural world, again indicating that He was God, for only God had such control.

His teaching was so astonishing, amazing, and profound and so authoritative that they never heard anyone who spoke like He spoke, and no man ever made the truths of God as clear as He made them. It was very apparent that He had supernatural power, supernatural ability, and that He spoke profound things, the likes of which they had never heard. And, in fact, they became attracted to Him because of His healings. They wanted life without sickness. Doesn’t everybody? They were game for that. And He had the special markings of a king. He might be king material if He could provide a disease-free, pain-free existence. Everybody wanted that.

And then it was apparent also by the several occasions on which He fed large amounts of people, literally creating food for them, that He could also provide food for everybody, and battling for bread was a major issue in life before the fast-food era in which we now live. Here was a healer, here was one who could neutralize the powers of darkness, here was one who could create food simply by a word. This much was king material. He could provide a welfare state the likes of which they never conceived of, free from disease, and free from any necessity to work to provide your own living and to buy your own bread. He was one who might just be the king. As long as He worked in the social area, the physical realm, as long as

He overpowered Satan who debilitated people, they were interested in Him.

But He didn’t stop there. They really had another agenda. They had hoped that He would move into one other great area, and that was the political or military area, and He would overthrow Rome, and dispossess Rome of its control over Israel, free the land of Palestine and make Israel its own sovereign state. And they were hoping that He would enact such a military enterprise against Rome,

leading some insurrection or even greater miraculously throwing them out. But He didn't do that.

The one thing He did add to His healing, His casting out of demons, and the profound nature of His teaching - the one thing He did add, and the greatest demand of all was that He demanded spiritual cleansing, and He spoke about repentance, and He spoke about acknowledgment of sin, and turning from sin, and spiritual blessings. And with that they lost interest. As soon as He confronted their sin, they were gone. As soon as He endeavored to deal with the issue of repentance, they turned and left. He ceased to be king material at that point.

Leaving Galilee, He came into the southern part of the land of Israel known as Judea, in which the city of Jerusalem is the center of focus, and there again He began His ministry. And the response was similar to that in Galilee. Opinion followed a very similar pattern. As He demonstrated His power over the natural world and His power over the supernatural world, the people were enamored by Him. They followed Him in great crowds while He healed them and fed them. And some wanted to make Him king.

But again, He needed to sift out the mob. He needed to get to those who really had the right perspective, and who were interested in coming to God for spiritual salvation and blessing, and who were therefore by necessity willing to repent of their sin. So He began to sift the mob by presenting spiritual truth, by demanding a recognition of sin, by condemning hypocrisy, and condemning false religion, and false religious leaders. And the crowds began to melt away. Their interest turned to indifference, and their indifference turned to anger, and eventually their anger turned to hostility to the degree where they ultimately crucified Him. And what John said came to pass, "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

But one thing is clear again in again in John's gospel, and it is this. They were responsible for what they did because they saw enough, and heard enough to believe the truth. And some believed. In 7:40, "Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, 'This certainly is the Prophet,' " meaning the prophet predicted by Moses who would be the Messiah. Verse 41, "Others were saying, 'This is the Christ,' - " or the Messiah. "Still others were saying, 'Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He?' "

So the multitude was certainly split, but some acknowledged that He was the promised prophet and the promised Messiah. Most of the people, however, rejected. In fact, it's of note to remember that when Jesus finally went to Galilee after His resurrection and appeared to the disciples in Galilee, there were 500 of them that gathered, a very small group when measured against the large population in the Galilean area.

And when the disciples of Jesus were gathered in the upper room in Jerusalem representing those who believed in the southern part of the country, there were only 120 gathered there when the Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost. Seven to eight hundred people who showed up at those great events and were counted among those who believed in Jesus Christ, a rather small number compared with the whole of the nation of Israel.

But they had all been exposed to His teaching. They had all been exposed to His miracles. He had banished disease from all of Palestine. And the word of His miracles had gone far and wide in that land, including the resurrections from the dead, most notably that raising of Lazarus from the dead,

which was the most notable of all His resurrections because in that case, Lazarus had not just recently died but rather had been in the grave for days.

In spite of all of that, the mass of people in the land of Palestine rejected Christ. And John's message throughout his gospel is they have no one to blame but themselves. If you have heard the truth, if you have been exposed to the reality of Jesus Christ and you do not believe, you bear the full weight of that unbelief.

In verse 21 in our passage Jesus makes a stunning statement. He said to them, "I go away - " speaking of His soon coming death and His ascension in the end to the Father " - I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." And here Jesus crystallizes one of the major issues in John's gospel, and it is this issue. People who reject Jesus Christ die in their sins. That is to say, they die with unforgiven sin. They die with a lifetime of sin unatoned for, unpaid for, a lifetime of accumulated culpability. And consequently, an eternity faces them of unrelenting punishment. Jesus is telling these Jews that they will not be able to follow Him where He goes. And where is He going? He's going to heaven to be with His Father, and they won't go there.

Back in chapter 7 for a moment, look at verse 33 and you'll find a similar conversation between Jesus and the Pharisees and chief priests. Jesus says in verse 33, "He said to them, 'For a little while longer I am with you, then I go to Him who sent Me.' " Speaking of His death, resurrection and ascension, going back to heaven. " 'You shall seek Me, and shall not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.' " He announced to them that He was going to a place they would never see.

The Jews, therefore, said to one another - and this is a mocking kind of comical response. They're jesting, "Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find Him? He's not intending to go to the dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks, is He?" Or Gentiles? They hated the Gentiles and they're mockingly saying, "Where does He think He's going to go? Is He going to leave the country and go out and minister to the despised Gentiles? Is that what He's going to do? And try to reach the Jews in the dispersion that have been scattered abroad among the Gentiles?" "What is this statement that He said, 'You will seek Me, and will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come?' "

So He already said that to them, and they just laughed it off, mocked it. He says it again - now we come back to John 8 - almost identically, "I go away, you'll seek Me, you'll die in your sins; where I am going, you cannot come." There is the supreme disaster, beloved, to die in your sin, to die without your sin being forgiven, to die without your sin being atoned for, without the penalty for it being paid. And when you die in your sin, you will never go to the place where Jesus dwells.

Still happening today. The latest statistics that I read that are about 100 people a minute die, and that means that about 100 people a minute go to hell. They die in their sin. They die without forgiveness. They die with full culpability and full responsibility for their own iniquity. They die to experience eternal weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth, fire, thirst, separation from God, unrelenting remorse, and the pangs of a fully informed conscience. And here Jesus is warning about that.

John wrote this gospel, he says in 20:31, "that you might believe; and that believing you might have life in the name of Jesus Christ." He wrote it so that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior. And that believing, you might have eternal life. But for those

who do not believe, John makes it clear again and again that they will die in their sins and they will never go where Jesus is.

The inevitable consequences of unbelief and rejection in any age is to go out of the presence of God forever. And it is not annihilation, and it is not soul sleep, and it is not nothingness, it is into an eternal torment. Jesus says, reject me and you will die culpable, and God's wrath will only be satisfied by an eternity of torment.

Since many people choose this rejection, it's important for us to look at this text and to understand what John is saying here. And as we examine ourselves today, let's start at the bottom line and be sure that we are in the faith and not headed for a death with full culpability of sin and an eternity of punishment.

"You shall die in your sin," verse 21. How is it that that happens? Let me give you four ways to guarantee you will die in your sin and I'm going to borrow them from the words of Jesus here. Four ways to guarantee you will die in your sin, four ways to guarantee that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross is meaningless to you.

Number one, be self-righteous. Be self-righteous. That will do it. The first guaranteed way to die in your sins is to be completely content with your own ability to please God. Believe that you can be good enough, or religious enough, or pray enough, or go to church enough, or be moral enough, or have good deeds that outweigh on some imaginary scale the weight of your bad deeds, just be self-righteous.

Look at verse 22, "Therefore the Jews were saying, 'Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, "Where I am going, you cannot come'?" What did they mean by this? What kind of a response was this? Well they twisted Jesus' words to mean He must be going to hell. We're certainly going to heaven. And He must be going to a portion of hell reserved for those who commit suicide.

Why did they say that? Well, an orthodox Jew despises suicide, always has. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, the person who committed suicide went to the darkest pit of Hades, that the most heinous crime one could commit was suicide. And the darkest, blackest part of Hades was reserved for someone who killed himself. So mockingly they are saying, "Well, maybe He's going to kill Himself and go down to that black hole in Hades reserved for those who commit suicide, a place we certainly never will go."

So they ridicule Him. They stand there deaf to the warning that they are going to die in their sin, with all that horror that that involves, and they turn it into a mocking joke about Jesus committing suicide and Himself going into some black hole of eternal punishment, believing themselves to be going nowhere but heaven. How deceived they were.

Once again, as so often in His time on earth, the Jewish leaders turned their venom on the Son of God. Yes, He was going to die. But His death was not suicide. Voluntary, yes. Willing, yes. Self-sacrificing, yes. But not at His own hand, at the hands of men, at the hands of those very detractors who spoke to Him this way.

Their ignorant mocking came about because of their self-righteousness. Do you understand that?

They mocked Him because they didn't think they needed a Savior. The whole idea of them dying in their sins was ludicrous to them. After all, they were the spiritual ones. They were the religious ones. They were the orthodox. They kept all the laws, and all the rituals, and all the routines, and all the ceremonies, and all the traditions with exacting detail.

They had absolutely no idea that they would ever be going to any other place than heaven. They were so self-righteous that Jesus' warning was a joke and they laughed until they died, and then they cried and they still do. So confidently self-righteous they could mock a Savior. So confidently self-righteous they could mock the idea that they could die in their sins.

I warn you, self-righteousness is deadly. It is a guarantee for dying in your sin. If you do not admit your inability to save yourself, if you do not admit that your good works achieve nothing by way of eternal salvation, if you do not admit that your religious activities, your ceremonies, and rituals, and church attendance, and prayers, and whatever else produce nothing for you by way of eternal salvation, you will die in your sins.

But when you admit that all your morality, and all your religious activity, and all the ritual of religion that you could possibly do makes no contribution to your salvation because your sin is so deep and so profound that no effort of your own can touch it, then you will cast yourself at the feet of a Savior who provided the sacrifice for your sin.

But apart from that, you will die in your sin. You will be like the Pharisee in Luke 18 saying, "I'm glad I'm not like other men, certainly not like that dirty sinner down there. I tithe, and I fast, and I do all of this." And Jesus said that man did not go home justified.

It reminds us of Proverbs 12:15 which says, "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." And there's no greater fool than a self-righteous fool who cuts himself off from salvation by grace because he thinks he can make some contribution to it. "That which is highly esteemed in the sight of man is an abomination before God," Luke 16:15 says.

These Jews were trying to earn salvation, like a lot of other folks. In all the world of religions of human achievement, all the religions of the world that attempt to earn salvation by human effort fall into the same category. They believe they had by their own works righteousness satisfied God's requirement, and thus they had achieved salvation, were headed for heaven. And the only place Jesus would go where they wouldn't be would be in Hades in some dark pit of hell belonging to those who kill themselves.

So, you could guarantee that you'll die in your sin by just being self-righteous. Just be certain that you're not a sinner. Just be certain that you don't need saving. Just invent a lifestyle of religion that fits you. Don't admit you need a Savior. Don't pound on your breast and say, "God, be merciful to me a sinner." Trust your works, trust your religion, trust your rituals and I'll guarantee you you'll die in your sin.

There's a second gilt-edged guaranteed way to die in your sins in verse 23. "He was saying to them, 'You are from below, I am from above.' " They missed the point. That really goes with the first point. They had it backwards. They thought they were above and He was of below. They had it reversed. Above is heaven, below is hell. "You're from below, I'm from above." You've got it reversed.

Then He says this, “You are of this world, I am not of this world.” And here’s the second way to guarantee that you will die in your sins, and that is be worldly, be earthbound, another guarantee; be preoccupied with the world, live for the world, live for the temporal system, live for the ideologies of this world system.

What does He mean when He says, “You are of this world”? “World” is a very important word in John’s gospel, used repeatedly. And it’s used with several different meanings. Sometimes it refers to people, sometimes it refers to ideologies. Here it has to do with those ideologies which engulf the minds of people, of course. But when He’s talking about “this world,” He’s talking about the invisible spiritual system that dominates the world. It is a system of evil.

Satan is the god of this age, the prince of this world. He is the one who has orchestrated a system of belief, a system of morality, a system of religion, a system of ideologies, a system of behavior, a system of materialism, and all of that that is opposed to God. It’s like 2 Corinthians 10, it’s every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God. It’s the whole cosmos, the whole invisible spiritual system of evil.

We use the word “world” in that way. We talk about the world of politics, the world of business, the world of medicine, the world of sports. What we mean by that is the environment or the sphere in which those things dominate. And there is a world in which we live as human beings. It is the organized system of satanic lies and deception raised up against the knowledge of God, Satan’s system opposing Christ’s.

And in Luke 16:8 Jesus calls the unbelievers “children of the system.” They buy into the ideology somewhere. The system is hostile to God. It’s hostile to Christ. It is dominated by materialism, that is to say a preoccupation with that which passes away. It is dominated by humanism, the worship of man and the elevation of man’s mind, even to the place where he can redeem himself. It’s dominated by sex, by physical fulfillment in pleasure, by carnal ambition, by pride, by greed, by self-pleasure, by self-desire.

Its opinions are wrong. Its aims are selfish. Its pleasures of sinful. Its influence is demoralizing. Its politics are corrupt. Its honors are empty. Its smiles are fake. Its love is fickle, et cetera, et cetera. That’s the world system. It is a lot of philosophies, and psychologies, and religions, and ideologies that make up unregenerate, ungodly, unbiblical thinking.

And it is a world that will be destroyed. The world and all that is in it will pass away, John said. And that’s why he said in 1 John 2:15, “Love not the world neither the things that are in the world. For anyone who loves the world can’t love the Father.” Where there is the love of the world, the love of the Father doesn’t exist.

Jesus points out here this great contrast. He says to them in verse 23, “You are of this world, I am not of this world.” We have two competing ideologies, two competing systems of thought. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” And friendship with the world, James 4:4 says, is enmity with God. These Jewish leaders, though they would say they were religions and that they were spiritual, were genuinely caught up and trapped in the satanic system of evil by which he rules the world: Sinful, selfish, earthbound souls who lived out a system controlled by the prince of this

world and were separated from God and from Christ by an infinite gulf.

For a man to die in his sin, all he needs to do is just be earthbound, just believe the lies of Satan that are in the system. Just love the system and all that is in it, and that will guarantee you will die in your sins.

Sometimes the gospel penetrates that kind of mind and heart a little while, like in the parable of Matthew 13, but because of the love of this world and the deceitful of riches, it dies. There must be a breach and a break. Jesus is not of this world. He said to Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world.” First John says, “The whole world lies in the lap of the evil one.” We believers don’t. We’ve made that distinction. James says we are even to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, uninfluenced from its satanic ideologies.

There’s a third way, and this is the crux of the passage, that you can guarantee to die in your sins. First of all, to be self-righteous and think you don’t need a Savior, you can save yourself, of make some contribution to saving yourself, any contribution. Secondly, by being earthbound, and that is being enamored with the world system and unwilling to let it go. And thirdly, verse 24, “I said therefore to you that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins.” Here’s the third guarantee way to be certain you will die in your sin. Be unbelieving; be self-righteous, be earthbound and be unbelieving. That’s really all it takes. Be unbelieving.

The only way to escape hell is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And John again, quoting his thesis in 20:31, “These things are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ; and believing you might have life through His name.” No one has to die in his sins or her sins. But the one who persists in rejection will die in sin through unbelief.

Now what do we have to believe? Well, He says it right here. “Unless you believe that I am He.” What He’s saying here is the name of God. Unless you believe that I am God, that I am the one sent from God, the great I am Himself. He uses really what is the Hebrew tetragrammaton, the name of God, the I Am that I Am. Unless you believe that I am.

Well what does “I am” mean? It means all that He is. Unless you believe fully the truth about Me - that’s what He’s saying. How does one become a Christian? By believing the truth about Jesus Christ. This is the Son question and this is the big issue. Here we are, still debating this issue. I am astounded at this.

I recently was down in Scottsdale, Arizona, Darrel DelHousaye’s church, and I did a series on the theology of faith, gave six messages on the theology of faith. And talking through all of this, I am continually astounded to realize that people within the large, broad category of evangelicalism are trying to still sort out what it takes to be a Christian. It’s astonishing to me. The question being as what must someone believe in order to genuinely be saved? There really needs no muddy water in regard to that. It is crystal clear in Scripture.

I can sum it up very simply by what Jesus said here. “You must believe that I am He.” What does that mean? You must believe that Christ is who He is.

Well, what does that encompass? I’ll give you what I call the “drive train of gospel truth,” the absolute

necessities of gospel truth. Here's where they start. If you're going to believe the truth about Christ, here's what it includes. First of all, you have to believe in an eternal trinity, because Christ said He was one with the Father and that He was eternal, and before Abraham was ever created He existed. So you must believe that He is part of an eternal trinity. Anything less than a trinity makes Christ something other than who He is.

So the heart of evangelical faith, the heart of gospel truth is trinitarian, that God is three persons, and yet one. To say anything other than that is to misconstrue who He is, and He says you must believe that I am who I am. So you start with believing the trinity. Those who deny the trinity don't understand who Jesus Christ is. They do not believe that He is who He is.

Secondly, you must then believe that He is incarnate in human form, that this member of the trinity entered into human history in time and space in a human body. You must believe, then, in the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, and that encompasses the virgin birth, which is God's definition of how this incarnation took place, so that the Christ could be born into this world sinless. And so, you must believe that He is God, that He is eternal, that He is a member of the eternal trinity, that He was incarnated into the world through the virgin Mary.

Then, you must believe in a sinless life because that's true of Him, as well. He lived a sinless life. He couldn't be born like normal people were born or He wouldn't be the God-Man. And He could not have a sin in His life, or a weakness in His life, or a failure in His life, or He would not have fulfilled all righteousness, which righteousness is imputed to those who believe in Him.

So you must believe in a trinity. You must believe the eternal trinity, that Jesus Christ a member of the trinity was incarnated, born of the virgin Mary, came into the world and lived a sinless life, which in fulfilling perfect righteousness became the righteousness that can be imputed to those who believe.

And then you must believe that He died on the cross as a sufficient substitionary sacrifice, an atonement for sin, and that He died there and paid the penalty for the sins of all who would ever believe, because that's indeed who He is, the Lamb of God. You must believe that His death satisfied God completely, and that full atonement was made, and that that's why God raised Him from the dead the third day, and then took Him and seated Him at His right hand, where He sits as Lord. He gave Him a name above every name, which is the name "Lord." He sits at

the right hand of the Father, interceding for His own, and ruling, and some day will come again and establish His kingdom on earth, and bring eternal glory to His own beloved, redeemed people.

That's the heart of Christian faith. Take anything out of that and you've got some other Jesus. And Paul said if anybody preaches any different Jesus, let him be anathema, any different gospel, any different message. Paul told the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians, "I don't want you to be removed from the simplicity and devotion that you have toward Christ." If somebody preaches another Christ, they do not preach the truth.

How do we have any difficulty understanding that this is the Christ whom we must believe? This is the truth and this is what Christians believe. If you don't believe that, you're not a Christian. You say, "Well, what about people who believe in God?" They're not Christians. They will die in their sins.

“Well, what about the people that believe all of that about Jesus, but also believe that they do have do some works: Get baptized, or do some ceremonies, or keep some laws in order to add to their salvation?” They won’t get to heaven either, they’ll die in their sins and go eternally to hell. Why? Because they will not recognize that Christ alone and Christ completely is the sacrifice for sin to which nothing can be added.

It is by grace through faith alone. And any attempt to add anything to it negates it, grace is no more grace. Anything you try to do to earn any part of your salvation misunderstands the sacrifice of Christ. And any misunderstanding of the meaning of Christ in His sacrifice is something less than the gospel. Believe it, Christianity or Christendom, as such, is full of people who have a lot of information about what I’ve just said regarding the gospel, but who do not have that total trust in Jesus Christ alone being who He is, and being the only, and the complete sacrifice for sin, therefore trusting in nothing of their own efforts or works.

Sad to say, many, many who name the name of Christ and say, “Lord, Lord, we did this, we did that,” are not known to Him, and will die in their sins, and where He has gone they will never come.

So, Jesus says to them, “Unless you believe - ” in verse 24 “ - Unless you believe that I am who I am, you shall die without your sins being forgiven - ” and you will therefore eternally pay the penalty.

There is one final guaranteed way that you can die in your sins and they exhibit this, obviously. Be self-righteous, be earthbound, or be unbelieving, fourthly, be willfully ignorant or obstinately ignorant. Verse 25, this is so amazing. “So they were saying to Him, ‘Who are You?’ ” This is absolutely unbelievable that they would say that, after all they had seen, after all He had done, after they had heard. “Jesus said to them, ‘What have I been saying to you from the beginning?’ ” Talk about thick. “I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, that He who sent me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” He’s says, “I’ve been speaking and speaking, and what I’ve been speaking is the very Word of God.”

And to show you how thick they were, verse 27, “They didn’t realize He had been speaking to them about the Father.” Even though He said that over and over again. “I and the Father are one - I don’t speak of My own self, what the Father shows Me I speak.” All of that He had been saying, all up to chapter 8, they had heard it all.

What is this? It’s, first of all, sneering mockery. “You? Who are You? Who do You think You are making statements like You’re making? What gives You the right to assume such a role as prophet and purveyor of truth? And who do You think You are speaking the way You speak?” They should have known who He was, He made it clear repeatedly, over and over and over again.

You remember the next chapter, the 9th chapter, the blind man was healed by Jesus, and the leaders came to Him and they said, “Who is this and where is He from?” And the blind man said, “I can’t believe it - ” in verse 30 “ - that you don’t know where He’s from and He opened my eyes.” I mean, it was willful ignorance.

Why are they willfully ignorant? John 3 makes it clear, “Men love darkness rather than - ” what? It was dark because they wanted it that way. It’s always dark when you love your sin. It was a willful darkness. Back in 8:19 He says, “You don’t know Me and you don’t know My Father. If you knew Me,

you would know My Father."

You don't know either of us. You are in the dark, and that's the way you want it, because you love your sin. In 7:17, Jesus said, "If any man is willing to do His will." When you get to the place where you are willing to do God's will instead of your sin, then you will know of My teaching. Truth comes to those who desire it.

It's like the Old Testament says, "If you seek Me with all your heart, you'll find Me." When you're willing to do God's will, you'll know My teaching. Then you'll know that I speak from God. But as long as you are obstinately loving your sin and cherishing your sin, even the sin of pride and self-righteousness, you will die in your sin.

Theirs was a self-content, mocking ignorance born out of a love for their own pride. They heard who He was many, many times. They saw ample evidence of it, but sin produces unbelief, and unbelief produces obstinate ignorance. So they refused to know because they loved their sin.

You want to die in your sin? Be self-righteous, be earthbound, be unbelieving, be obstinately and willfully ignorant, and you will die in your sin. Jesus says in verse 29, he should have known, "He who sent Me is with Me; He's not left Me alone, I always do the things pleasing to Him." You should have seen God in me. You should have known, you should have heard, but you didn't.

It ends on a good note. Verse 30, "As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him." That would be my prayer this morning, that as I have spoken these things to you, as I have reiterated these words of Jesus that many would come to believe in Him.

You want to die in your sins? Just continue in your course. Just believe you're good enough the way you are. Just carry on with your love affair with human ideologies. Just refuse to believe the great truths concerning Christ. Love your sin so much that you choose the darkness and are willfully ignorant. But to do this, you're going to have to stumble over the cross. That's right. You're going to have heartlessly, irreverently trample Christ's blood because you know the gospel. So you're going to have to stumble across the cross.

Even this morning, as we come to the Lord's Table, the cross is going to be demonstrated again and you're going to have to reject it again to continue the course you're in. Inconceivable, really. Why will you die when you can live? Why will you not be like those many who believed and didn't want to die in their sin? Why will you not accept an atonement for your sin? That's the all-encompassing question. And the answer is you're self-righteous, you're good enough the way you are, you love the world too much, you refuse to believe, or you love your sin and you cherish the darkness and the ignorance that comes with it. In any case, the price is eternal. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, as we think about the potency of the words of Jesus and folly of those who refuse to believe, we are reminded that such goes on today every day and perhaps even the battles that Jesus engaged in John 8 are occurring in the hearts of some here this morning. I pray that Your Spirit's power would break the grip of self-righteousness, the world, unbelief, and the love of sin; and that the heart would desire to do Your will so that the one who is willing to do Your will will know the truth.

Father, as we come to this Table, we are reminded again of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ paid for

our sins on the cross, that He bore our sins as we read from the prophet Isaiah, that He carried our sorrows, that He was bruised for our iniquities, wounded for our transgressions, that chastening for our well being was on Him. By His stripes we are healed. We thank You, Father, for the promise that to all who believe in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, there is complete and full salvation. To that end, we would pray for every person here.

And, Lord, for those of us who are Christians, we would ask that each of us might examine our own hearts, as well, as we come to this Table, affirming that we are saved, we do belong to You. May we again be reminded of the tragedy of sin interrupting the sweetness of our relationship with You, and may we confess everything that is known, and ask You to cleanse everything that is unknown, as well, and may we come to this table with pure hearts.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org

COPYRIGHT (C) 2016 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).