

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Simple Gospel

Scripture: John 8:21-30

Code: 1246

I want to share with you this morning out of the eighth chapter of John's Gospel if I can. In John 8, I want to just call to your attention a simple message this morning really just presenting to you the Gospel again. I want to call to your attention verses 21 and following down to verse 30 briefly as we look at it. I have entitled the section How to Die in Your Sins. Now last Lord's Day morning in preparation for the Christmas season we presented a positive message in a way. We tried to paint a picture of the human problem, the human dilemma, the situation of man's need as it exists in our world today particularly in our nation and how that Jesus Christ offers an answer to that.

Jesus Christ presents to a man the peace and the joy and the meaning and the purpose, the forgiveness that every man is looking for. This morning I want to go at that same thought from a negative standpoint. It's wonderful when a person comes to Christ. They're no longer under the tyranny of sin and guilt we mentioned last time, no longer under the tyranny of lust and desire, no longer under the bondage of that terrible purposeless and meaningless kind of existence. Christ gives meaning to life. He's the possibility for lofty consideration and thought and Christ forgives totally sin. So there was a positive element in our talk last time.

But this morning I want to hit it from the negative. What happens when somebody does not want Jesus Christ, when somebody maintains the masquerade of Christmas, giving homage to an event and not tolerating the individual in which all that the event is really finds it meaning? We talked about the fact that to receive Jesus Christ is to know all that there is to know about life abundant and life eternal and on the other hand not to receive Jesus Christ is to receive the curse of God.

We find in the passage of John 8 some very condemning statements on the part of Jesus. Now this isn't an easy thing for me to discuss. It isn't easy for me to even understand. I sometimes want to cry out with Richard Baxter, "Oh for an empty Hell and a full Heaven." It isn't that you want anyone - wish anyone should ever enter Hell. That isn't Jesus' desire. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. It's not our desire. So it's not condemning but it's warning in which Jesus speaks the words that He speaks in our text for today.

It ought to be brought to our attention that people who celebrate Christmas while rejecting Christ are engaged in the most foolish kind of fun. It's like having a party on a spiritual Lusitania. It's just ignoring reality. If people really knew that their eternal destiny was determined by the Christ of Christmas and they had rejected that I doubt whether there would be much to celebrate. You see, all throughout the

Bible there is no neutrality on this issue. Jesus put it simply and succinctly and summed up all of Scripture when he said, "You're either for me or against me." There is no neutrality.

To go all the way back in the first set of writings that the Bible gives us, the Pentateuch, and to look at the 30th chapter of Deuteronomy and to hear the words of Moses starts off this whole pattern that goes throughout the book clear to the book of Revelation. This is what it says. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore choose..." It's the same two things that we see right through Scripture, life or death, blessing or cursing. "You're either for me or against me."

In Joshua 24:15 it says, "Choose you this day whom you will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the river or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Choose you whom you will serve. Two options are given; the true God or false gods. You either serve the true God or false gods. All you come into the Gospel of John now and you find the very same thing. Look at John 3 as we kind of sneak up on the 8th chapter there.

John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already." You only have two things. You're either condemned or not condemned. That's all. You're either condemned to Hell or not condemned and the crux of the issue is whether you believe. He is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

So we are to choose. In the book of Revelation the whole thing closes out with an invitation. It says, "And the spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let him that heareth say, 'Come.' And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." Choice. Choosing. One of two ways. One of my children said to me the other day, "Daddy, is it two that there's only two places you go when you die, Heaven or Hell?" I said, "That's two. Only two, Heaven or Hell." No neutral ground, no purgatory, no waiting place.

In this day and age Hell may have different designations as to its final form and identity but there are only two places. Heaven is where God is. Hell is where God is not. Those are the two places and everybody chooses. You've heard the old line, "He had nobody to blame but himself," and that's Biblical. There may be a big theological argument about who's responsible when people get saved, whether it's God or whether men have anything to do with it but there's no argument Biblically about who's responsible when people go to Hell. It's because men choose.

Now, in John 5:40 Jesus substantiates this reality when he says this. Verse 39, "Search the Scriptures," puts the responsibility on our part, "For in them ye think ye have eternal life and they are they which testify of me," and here comes the issue, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." The responsibility belongs to us. Romans 1,

Paul says, "Man is without excuse."

In John 16:9 it says the holy spirit will convict of sin. What sin? "...because they believe not on me." To believe not on Christ is the sin. It is the S-I-N. The sin of all sins for which each individual is responsible. In Revelation 2:21 the Lord looks at the Jezebel operating in the church in Thyatira and he says, "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; [but] she repented not." In other words God has given the call to repentance and when people do not repent and turn to him and believe, turning away from sin that is their own fault. They are responsible.

Now as we come to John 8 we notice in verse 21 a powerful statement on the part of Jesus given to the Jewish leaders. "Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way". Notice it is, "my way," that way which is specifically prescribed for him. "And ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sin," - the original Greek is singular - "...die in your sin: where I go, ye cannot come." Now Jesus is making a very strong statement about the fact that he's going to Heaven and they're not.

Already by chapter 8 he can make such a warning because they have had enough information to have made a decision. For 8 chapters John has been chronicling the self-manifestation of God in Christ. Jesus has done many wonders up to this chapter, some in Galilee, some in Jerusalem. Jesus has said many astounding things. His claims to deity are clear. Nobody needs to mistake them.

Later on in the 10:37 & 38 Jesus says, "You should believe me for the words and works." He echoes it in 14:10 & 11. "You should believe me for my words and my works," and all the way through we have seen his works and heard his words again and again even through chapter 8. In chapter 1 he was introduced by John as God incarnate, "the Word made flesh [who] dwelt among us," "the only begotten of the Father."

In John 2 we saw the miracle that he did at Cana as he made water into wine. In John 3 we saw him give the new birth to Nicodemus. In John 4 we saw him read a woman's mind and tell her whole history and he had never known her and talk about the fact that he was living water. We have heard enough of Jesus' claims. In John 5 we hear his dialogue with the Pharisees as he claims to be God of very Gods who has been commissioned by God to make all ultimate judgment. In John 6 we see him doing many miracles all day long and then the climax to all of it, he feeds those thousands and thousands of people on the hillside in Galilee. John 7 he proceeds to Jerusalem and the things that he says there and the marvels that occur do credit the fact that his words are indeed true, he is God. In John 8 it's the same thing again, he forgives sin in the beginning of the chapter. He claims to be the light of the world.

All of these words and all of these works and all of these signs and wonders should have been sufficient to illicit genuine faith and confidence in who he was. In the mind of Jesus anyone who is seeing and hearing and experiencing those things and not believing bears the guilt alone of their own

sin. They are without excuse. They had rejected Jesus Christ in Galilee because they just wanted the physical and they didn't want to deal with spiritual reality and they did the same thing in Jerusalem.

In Galilee originally big crowds followed him and they followed him because he fed them and he healed them and when he started laying down some principles of life they stopped wanting to crown him king. He started meddling in their sin and he came to Jerusalem the same thing happened. Great huge crowds followed him everywhere and as he began to turn away from the physical to the spiritual and deal with the sin in the hearts of people the crowds began to melt away and finally the only crowd left was a crowd of Pharisees trying to figure out how to kill him.

The Christmas story has this editorial comment from John. John says, "He came unto his own and his own received him not," and they were responsible Beloved. Believe me they were responsible and so are you and so am I and so is every man. Some believe. John 7:40; some said this is the prophet. Verse 41, some said this is the Messiah, some believed that his claim was true. Some said he is the one prophesied in Deuteronomy 18, the prophet that shall come of whom Moses spoke. Some said he is the Messiah but most rejected and of them Jesus said, "You will not come to me that you might have life." But they had nobody to blame but themselves, nobody at all.

Read Hebrews 6 and Hebrews 10 there you will find what happens to people who have full revelation, full light and turn away from the truth. They have nobody to blame but themselves. So seeing their unbelief, seeing their rejection, their animosity, their desire to kill him - in fact in verse 20 no man laid hands on him. They were trying to kill him but his hour wasn't yet come. So God had held them back from being able to take his life. Then Jesus confronts them in 21 and says, "I'm going my way and you shall seek me and die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come." Now the tragic result of refusing Jesus Christ is dying in your sin.

Now Jesus had told them in 7:33 that he was going away in fact he told them where. He said, "I'm going to him that sent me. I'm going back to the Father and you're going to seek me but you're not going to be able to find me and where I'm going to be you'll never be able to be," and they didn't understand that. They said, "Are you going to go out into the dispersion where the Greeks are and we won't be able to find you? What are you saying?" They were somewhat quizzical in chapter 7 but in chapter 8 they're cynical. Jesus says to them the same thing, "I'm going and you're going to look for me but you're going to die in your sin and where I go you're not going to come." Their response is very cynical, "Then said the Jews, 'Will he kill himself?'"

Now Jesus is simply saying this, "I'm going to go to the Father and you're not." Like my child asked me there's only two places, "I'm going to one and you're going to the other because you refuse me, because you reject me and if you seek too late your seeking is in vain." There is a tolerance to God's grace. In Amos 8:11&12 God says that, "I'm going to withdraw my word from Israel. Israel has not sought my word and so I'm going to remove my word and then you're going to seek my word but

there'll be a famine of my word and you'll look and you'll seek and you'll never find it." The same thing is true of His gospel.

In Proverbs 1:24 listen to this, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes". In other words because you continue to reject me I'm going to turn away from you. "When your fear comes as desolation, your destruction comes as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come on you then they shall call on me and I will not answer; they shall seek me early... they shall not find me...because they hated knowledge, they did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would have none of my counsel: they despised my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." In other words the day of Grace is ended and they are responsible and they will pay consequences which they themselves have built.

It's like the prisoner who was instructed by the king to make a chain and everyday he added another link and finally they took him and bound him with his own chain. That's how it is with sinful people who reject Christ. They are producing by their life their own ultimate disaster.

So Jesus says, "My death is going to take me to the Father. Yours is not because of sin." Now notice the statement, "You shall die in your sin." You shall die in your sin. What sin does he have in mind? The supreme sin, the one sin which is to reject Christ. John 16:9, "The holy spirit will convict of sin." What sin? "Because they believe not in me." That is the sin. If you want to stumble around and say, "Well, I don't commit any sins. I'm a very good person and I try to do everything I can." If you have never received Jesus Christ that is the ultimate of sin.

He says, "Someday you will seek but you will die with sin that is unrepented and unforgiven." Of course that's the supreme disaster because that means Hell. They'll seek all right and the Jews did seek. They sought Heaven all their life long, these Jewish leaders. The word "Jew" as in John refers to the leaders far more often than the people. These Jewish leaders to whom Jesus spoke were seeking Heaven, believe me. But you know something? They sought it in the wrong place. Instead of seeking it at the feet of Jesus they sought it in their own self-righteousness.

You see, Romans 10:17 says faith comes by hearing a speech about Christ but instead of seeking it there they sought it in their own books and their own laws and their own rules and their own rituals. They not only sought it in the wrong place but they sought it in the wrong way. Romans 10 says they had a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. They were seeking God according to their own system and it was not whole hearted.

Jeremiah 29:13 says if you seek me with your whole heart you will find me. Well, they didn't have their whole heart to seek God because they had devoted their whole heart to the proud propagation

of their own self-righteousness. So they were seeking in the wrong place, in the wrong way and unfortunately they would be also found seeking at the wrong time. I'm sure there have been many people who when it was far too late were seeking. Jesus may have in mind here what happens after a person dies. So sentence is passed on them if they continue to reject.

I read somewhere that somebody calculated that at least 100 people a minute go to Hell. That's a fearful thought. In Matthew 13 Jesus drew the lines of demarcation as clearly as he could. He says in Matthew 13:40 simply this, "As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this age as the Son of man shall send forth his angels they shall gather out of his kingdom all thing that offend, and them who do iniquity; and cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." Two places in Hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, in Heaven where you shine as the sun. He says if you've got ears you better listen. It's a fearful warning and Jesus is making that warning here.

He's saying, "I'm going to one place and you're not," and it isn't that he's brutalizing them and it isn't that he's sovereignly ending their choice and it isn't that he's putting a stop to all possibility. It's that he's warning them. When you hear people who hear people speak like this say, "God is angry God or God is not a loving God," don't you think that for a minute. God is so merciful and so loving that's why he warns us. No one ever went to Hell who didn't choose to go there and God isn't going to force himself eternally on somebody who doesn't want him.

Now there are four elements that I see in the rest of this text that guarantee a person, he can die in his sin. Jesus says, "You're going to die in your sin." How? There are four things that he brings out, four ways to die in your sin. Let's look at them.

Number one, be self-righteous. They're in the text here. They'll flow right out of it as we look. Number one is to be self-righteous. The first way to guarantee that you'll die in your sin and not go to the Father's house, not go to Heaven, not be where Jesus is the first thing is to just be convinced that you don't need to be saved. Just be convinced that you're all right. You have no need of a savior. Of course far and away this is the most difficult kind of people to reach. Very, very difficult to reach somebody who doesn't think he has any need. People who already have their own righteousness. "I'm all right. I belong to this special group. I'm a whatever culter. I'm one of the 144,000 and I've got my papers, man. I'm in. I've got my little ticket here that says I'm okay. I'm a righteous person." Self-righteous people, religious people, people who have developed a system which they believe gives them the right to enter God's presence. They are the hardest people to convince that they need a savior because they already feel they're all right.

Satan is clever. When he puts together a phony system based on human achievement and works righteousness he does it in such a complex way and such a supposedly Biblical way that it's

tremendously deceiving. People get captivated in that thing and they believe they're already righteous and you don't have anything to say to them. Nobody ever comes to Christ who doesn't see him as a savior who takes away sin unless he sees himself as a sinner who needs his sin taken away. These people are self-righteous. Look at their answer. Jesus has just given them a loving warning and their response is a mocking joke. "Then said the Jews, 'Will he kill himself because he said where I go you can't come,'" and they're laughing. This is humor to them. This is funny. "Oh, he's going to commit suicide."

You say, "What does that mean?" The Jews believe the suicide was the worst sin and that the blackest part of Hades was reserved for suicide victims, people who killed themselves. They had this in their principle so that when somebody committed suicide they went the blackest part of the pit permanently with no possibility of ever entering Abraham's bosom. That's what they believed. So for someone to commit suicide would be to go the blackest Hades. So they are saying, "Oh, if he's going to go where we're not going to go he must be going to kill himself and go to the blackest part of Hades because that would be the opposite place to where we're going." They reversed the whole thing. They said, "Oh, he must be going to Hell because we're going to Heaven."

They didn't even understand what he was saying. They were so self-righteous, so self-satisfied, so self-sanctified, so self-reconciled, so self-forgiven. They had systematized their religion so carefully that they could see it all worked out in their little rules and they believed that they were the ones who were the population of Heaven on the way home and if Jesus was going somewhere where they weren't he'd have to be going to the blackest part of Hades.

Here's Jesus kindly, mercifully, graciously warning them with an announcement of impending doom and they twist it around and say, "Well, he must be going to kill himself." How deaf can you be? But as I said you'll read your whole New Testament and be hard pressed to find the story of the conversion of a Pharisee. There are a few, not many. Hard people to reach, self-righteous people. He was going to die. They picked that up. That's right. When he said, "I'm going my way," they got the idea he was going to die. He was going to die, that's true and his death was going to be self-sacrificial but it wasn't a suicide even though it was voluntary and willing because they themselves - Acts 2:22 says, "By wicked hands have taken and crucified him." It was murder, not suicide but he was a willing victim to accomplish redemption.

So they laughed, until they died, and then they cried. They were so self-righteous. Self-righteousness is the big lie. The truth is you're saved by Christ. The lie is you're saved by anything other than Christ and the lie; the big lie of Satan comes in all kinds of packages. You can be saved by following these rules, doing these routines, this system, that system, this. You're good enough anyway. Good works that way, bad works. There's a myriad of possible systems to counter the one truth and it's all Satan's big lie. If Satan can get somebody into his system that says they're righteous it's very hard to extract them.

Self-righteousness is very ugly. I always think of what Job said. Job 12:2 he says, "No doubt you are the people and wisdom will die with you." Proverbs 12:15 says "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes." Luke 16:15, "That which is highly esteemed in the sight of men is an abomination to God." When men develop a system that's highly esteemed in their eyes it's an abomination to God. So these Jews were trying to earn salvation by their works, their righteousness, their religion. Religion as we saw in Galatians of human achievement rather than the religion of divine accomplishment.

So first way to die in your sins just be self-righteous and laugh at anybody that talks about sin. Scorn anybody who talks about Hell- the world does that all the time. The world mocks Jesus, laughs at Jesus, makes a joke out of warnings, a joke out of Hell. This is something to laugh at, something to be considered a joke. Put devil suits on little kids and let them run around on Halloween. That's real funny. It's a big joke.

Never admit your sin. Never admit you need Christ. Never admit there's a reality to Hell. Just make a joke out of it and mock it. Trust your own works, your own religion, your own deeds. A person who gets developed into this kind of a system, even if it isn't a religious system like Mormonism or Jehovah's Witnesses or even if it's their own self-made system can become very belligerent once they get into it, very hostile.

In the book I wrote on Galatians included a little article that was sent to the Melbourne paper after one of the people had heard Billy Graham preach. This is what he said, "After hearing Dr. Billy Graham on the air, viewing him on television and seeing reports and letters concerning his mission I am hardly sick of the type of religion that insists my soul and every one else's needs saving, whatever that means. I have never felt that I was lost nor do I feel 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 preached I prefer to remain forever damned."

That's a serious thing but you can see what's behind this is this. Here's a man who has developed a system in which he believes he has attained self-righteousness and because he has attained self-righteousness without any fear he mocks the truth because he believes that he is righteous before God. Fearful. That's exactly where these Pharisees were, exactly where these Scribes were. Jesus says, "Let's get the thing straight," in verse 23. He said unto them, "You are from beneath." He got their implication. They said, "Is he going to kill himself," and they were implying he must be going to Hades and he says, "You're from Hades. I am from above." You got it just reversed. You got it just backwards.

What a blow. He takes the knife with the cutting edge and goes to the core of their problem. They had everything reversed. "You're from Hades." What did he mean by that? Did he mean they came from there? No. They were born like other human beings but what he means is, "Your unbelief and your hypocrisy and your false religion and your ignorance and your willful self-righteousness are right out of Hades. In other words they are spawned from the enemy. They are of Satan. I am of God. He makes the distinction clear. He says, "I am going to God and you are not," and they say, "Oh, you must be going to the pit to devoid us," and he says, "No, you've got it backwards. You're going there because that's where you're from." In other words you're a part of that system.

Did you know that an unbelieving person in this world is from beneath in the sense that you're a part of the evil system? You're of your father the devil. John 8:44, that's what he meant. You walk according to the course of the prince of the power of the air, Ephesians 2:3. You're guided by Satan. But the believers from above Philippians 3 says that our citizenship is where? In Heaven. In Ephesians 1 we are in the heavenlies.

So you see we're connected to either Heaven or Hell while we're alive by virtue of whom we identify with. So he says to them, "You're from beneath. Your roots and your connections run down. Your lifestyle makes it manifest." So Jesus really lets them have it. He's warning them. You better realize where you're really from. You better realize the source of your so called religious system.

So he puts things in right perspective. You want to die in your sin just follow the Pharisees attitude. Believe you don't need Christ. Just be sure you're okay. You got everything kicked out. It's all in good shape. You've solved all the problems. You know what righteousness is and you've attained it and you don't need a savior. You convince yourself of that and you will die in your sin.

There's a second way, second way to die in your sin. Not only to be self-righteous but to be earthbound. To be earthbound. Look at verse 23 again. "He said unto them, You are from beneath; I am from above" - now here it comes - "Ye are of this world, I am not of this world." He draws another contrast. He says, "You have connections below. I have connections above. Consequently you're a part of the system and I'm not." The term world simply means the sphere or the invisible spiritual system of evil. We use it that way a lot. We say the world of politics or the world of arts or we say the Wide World of Sports or whatever. We use world to speak of a system of some kind and that's exactly the way it's used here. The system of evil opposed to God and opposed to Christ. He says, "You're a part of the system." Now if you want to guarantee that you're going to die in your sin just be a part of the system. Just buy whatever the world is selling and promoting.

In fact in Luke 16:8 Jesus calls unbelievers children of the system, children of the world. In Galatians 1:4 Jesus gave himself "that he might deliver us from this present evil" system. You say, "Well, what is the system?" Well, the system is hostile to God. It's hostile to the truth. It develops its own self-righteous systems. You could characterize the system in this way, it's materialistic. It's humanistic.

Man's going to solve his own problems and rule his own fate. It's lost in the sexpreoccupation. The system is characterized by carnal ambition, pride, greed, jealousy, envy, self-pleasure, self-desire, murder and on and on and on. 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 fickle and on and on and on. That's the system and it is in the process of dissolution.

1 John 2, the world is passing away. It will self-destruct. So he says, "You are of this system." Not from but of, identified with. So these sinful, selfish, earthbound souls who lived under the control of the dictates of the evil system run by Satan had separated themselves from Jesus Christ with a gulf in between that was impassible. He was heavenly. They were from the place that is called Hades, the occupation of Satan. Absolute opposites. Jesus was not of this world. They were of this evil system. Even though they were religious and maybe they were humanitarian they were part of the system.

So a simple thing Jesus is saying, "You're going to die in your sins for two reasons. Number one, you're self-righteous. Number two, you're totally engulfed in the system. You'll buy whatever the world's selling."

There's a third thing in verse 24. "I say therefore unto you, that you shall die in your sins." Now here it is plural and he broadens from the one sin of rejection to all the sins that come as a result of it. "You shall die in your sins." Why? "...for if ye believe not that I am ye shall die in your sins." The third way to guarantee that you'll die in your sin is to be unbelieving, to be unbelieving. Just don't believe. Just do not believe the gospel. Reject the gospel.

You don't have to go out and kill somebody to go to Hell. You don't have to be bad. Just don't believe. That's what he's saying. Hell is not for people who are all criminals. Hell is not for the bad guy on the block. Hell is for everybody and anybody who refuses Christ. As I said earlier if you refuse Christ in life God isn't going to force you to dwell with him forever in eternity. You see the way of faith is open. You can believe or you cannot believe. The choice is yours.

Now notice what he says. You say, "Well, what am I supposed to believe?" You hear people say that. I remember the song that used to be popular, I Believe. It went on saying I believe, I believe, I believe. Well, I believe what? There's one today that says I believe in music. You're in trouble if you do. What do you say? I believe what? If you ask, "Do you believe in Christ?" "Oh, yeah. I believe in Christ. He lived and so forth." Well, what do you mean? Well, notice what he says. "If you believe not that I am," and he would be implied in the sentence structure.

What do you mean if you believe if you believe that I am he? If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be. It isn't enough to believe that Jesus is the one you think He is. You must believe that he is the one he claimed to be. When God said his name he said "My name is I Am," and throughout the gospel of John Jesus kept repeating it. "I am the bread of life. I am the water of life. I am the light of

the world. I am the good shepherd. I am the door. I am the resurrection. I am the life. I am the way. I am the truth." He kept saying that again and again and again. He was identifying himself with God, with deity. You see it's a son question, not just a sin question. It's a question of believing that he is who he claimed to be.

To say, "Well then I'm going to die in my sin unless I believe that he is all that he claimed to be?" That's right. "Then I ought to find out who he claimed to be." That's right. That's why in Romans 10:17 it says, "Faith comes by hearing a message about Christ." You can never have true faith unless you hear the truth about Christ. Some of the old translations say faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God but the Greek says by hearing a speech about Christ. To hear about him, who he is and to believe with your heart that he is who he claimed to be and that God verified that claim by raising him from the dead is to be saved, Romans 10 says.

So he says, "You will die in your sin if you do not believe that I am who I claim to be, the bread and the water and so forth, God in human flesh." To refuse and to not believe and to turn away shatters hope and leaves only Hell's gloomy foreboding. That's how it is.

I've had people ask me, "How do you become a Christian?" Sitting on an airplane a fellow sat down next to me and he says, "Are you a teacher?" I said, "Well, of sorts." I was writing some things. He says, "What do you teach?" I said, "The Bible." He said, "Oh." He said, "I'm so glad I found you. You wouldn't happen to know how a person could become a Christian would you?" So I told him how. "What are you to believe in?" "I believe that Jesus is who he claimed to be, God in human flesh, the savior who died for your sin rose again, the gospel." Now you can go to Hell for just not believing that.

Say, "But how do I get the faith?" By hearing a message about Christ. If you haven't heard enough then you ought to get a book about Christ or you ought to hear some more or you ought to find somebody who can tell you. There's no sense in going to Hell for something you didn't do because not believing really translates into rejecting. "If you're not for me you're what? You're against me." They should've known but they continued to mock.

We come to the fourth element. To die in your sins all you have to do is be self-righteous. Just be convinced that you're all right on your own. You don't need anything. Be earthbound. Be totally engulfed in the system. Man, the system is going full blast at Christmas isn't it? Be unbelieving. "I don't know if that's the truth. Well, just don't believe it."

Fourth, be willfully ignorant. When you do hear the speech about Christ and the evidence is presented don't let it register. These Jewish leaders were willfully ignorant. They had enough evidence. They heard enough speeches about Christ. There was enough information but they refused to believe and in their chosen ignorance they mocked him again. Look at verse 25, "Then said they unto him, Who are you?" Or better, "Who do you think you are fellow? These are some pretty

ridiculous things you're saying, telling us we're going to die in our sins. Do you know who you're talking to? We're the spiritual elite. Who do you think you are? Some nobody from Nazareth come down here to tell the leaders of Jerusalem what's what. What gives you the right to assume a role of equality with God? What gives you the right to say you're the I Am?" So they are willfully ignorant.

In 8:19 this ignorance was manifest. They said to him, "Where is your Father? Jesus answered, You neither know me, nor my Father." "You are hopelessly ignorant. You think you know God. You don't know God. You think you know me and who I am and that I'm a fake and you don't know me either. You don't know anything and you are willfully ignorant because you are so dominated by sin."

Remember when the blind man was healed in chapter 9 and all the Jewish leaders came and said, "What's going on? Who is he? Who is he?" In 9:30, "The man answered and said to them, Why here is a marvellous thing, that you know not from where he is, and yet he's opened my eyes." This blind man had more sense than the Jewish leaders. Why? Because they willed to be ignorant. Hell will be filled with people who are there simply because they willed to be ignorant. They did not want Jesus making claims on their life. They didn't want to know the truth. They were satisfied and when they heard it they didn't want to understand it, they didn't want to examine it.

It's like John 7:17, "If any man wills to know the truth he shall know of the doctrine whether I speak of myself or of some other." In other words for the willing heart the truth is available but they weren't willing. You say, "Well, how can people be like that?" Simply stated in John 3 they are like that because they love their sin. The darkness doesn't like the light. Men love darkness rather than what? Light. For what reason? Their deeds were evil. Because of sin they didn't want to expose themselves. They were so smug in their self-righteousness they turned their back. So they were confirmed in a willful ignorance.

That's tragic because that takes them right in the category of Hebrews 6. They had enough information to believe and they're going to receive a punishment more severe than others. Of how much? Hebrews 10 says, "Greater punishment shall he be thought worthy who has trodden under foot the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing." In other words the greater punishment in Hell is going to accrue to the people who knew the most and trampled on it. Willful ignorance. So they refused to know and he doesn't give them any further revelation. They had plenty.

Verse 26, he follows up, "I have many things" - oh, he's answering, verse 25, first. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the same that I said to you from the beginning.'" "If you don't have enough information now I can't give you any more. You don't know who I am? You say 'Who are you?' Just the same that I've been claiming all along." "I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true: and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him." He says, "I have a lot more to say but they're words of judgement and they're not just my words of judgement. They're God's words

of judgement. My judgements all come from God." Read the 5th chapter. He says, "God's committed all judgement to him." He says, "I have some more. I'm not done talking to you," he says, "But the next thing I have to say to you is going to be in judgement." Willful ignorance brings judgement. Unbelief brings judgement. Earthbound attitudes bring judgement. Self-righteousness brings judgement and they didn't even recognize what was happening.

Verse 27, they didn't even understand that he spoke to them about God the Father. They thought he was talking about some judgement on his own part. They had no idea what he was talking about and yet he had made it clear again and again. The terrible, terrible thing that happens when you don't hear, when you don't hear, when you don't hear. That's why the Bible says occasionally, "Let him that has ears to hear, hear." So Jesus said to them, "Well, maybe you'll understand better when we have lifted up the Son of man," on the cross that means, "Then shall you know that I am." "You're going to know who I am when you crucify me, and that I do nothing of myself but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things."

Now how are they going to know that? What did the Father do at the death of Christ to verify the claims of Christ? One thing. He raised him what? From the dead. Repeatedly it says, "And the Father has raised him from the dead." Why? The Father raised him from the dead to verify the claims that he had made. He said, "When the resurrection comes you're going to have to look honestly at this thing."

You know what happened? It was wonderful because when the resurrection occurred the church was born and literally thousands of people in the city of Jerusalem did see and did believe. Didn't they? The church was born. So there was a great response and many right out of that crowd. Jesus saw some people who later became a part of that early church. "You'll know and you'll know that I'm speaking from the Father." In verse 29, "That he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always the things that please him." "You're going to know the Father's with me. You're going to know the Father sent me. You're going to know the Father accredited me. You're going to know that all the claims I made are true in that day when I am lifted up because the results of the death are going to be the resurrection." But for now they didn't know and many of them never knew and died. And many of them are without God for eternity right now.

It's not really possible but I wish it were to translate ourselves back in a time capsule and meet those people so we could put individual lives into this little group here and see the tragedy. Imagine it as if the people in this congregation right now who don't know Christ were all brought up here and we were to say to them, "You all will die and go to Hell forever." You get an idea of the intensity and the fearfulness of such a warning. How? By being self-righteous, being earthbound, being unbelieving or being wilfully ignorant. But there is another option. Look at verse 30. Some of those people were shook up and, "As he spoke these words, many," what? "Believed on him." Aren't you glad for that?

You know something? You can't always preach the positives. You've got to preach the negatives because the negatives are needed to bring some folks to Christ. Nothing would make me happier than to have it said of the service this morning, "And many believed on you." If you've never committed yourself to Jesus Christ you're separated from him by a gulf that you could never, ever span on your own. Not all your good deeds, self-righteousness, religion or anything can do it. You must come, recognize your sin and receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have a desire in your heart to do that this morning the best way to know how just simply and quietly in your heart just pray and say, "God, I want Jesus Christ. I receive him now. I don't want to die in my sin. I want to go where you are." If you do that He'll hear that prayer and your life will be transformed in a moment. If your faith is weak ask him to help you to believe. If you need more information so that you can make that decision - maybe you're ignorant but it isn't wilful. You do want to know. Ask him to teach you the truth of Christ.

Father, I pray that You'll bring those to the prayer room who need You today and others, Father, with whatever spiritual need they might have. Do Your work in their hearts so that no one would die in his sins or her sins but that we would all receive the gift you're offering. Don't let us be fooled by Satan to think we don't need you or it isn't true. Do Your work, Father. We thank You for saving us. Help us to share this great gospel with others. We praise You in Christ's name. Amen.

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