

HOW TO DIE IN YOUR SINS

John 8:21-29

By Andy Manning

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Death is universal. You are going to die.
2. The question is how, and when?
3. There are some really weird ways to die.
 - i. Falling out of bed – 450 every year die after falling out of bed.
 - ii. In 2015 a man named Randy Llanes was killed when he was impaled by the bill of a swordfish.
 - iii. Steve Erwin was killed when was stung in the heart by a sting ray.
 - iv. One man was killed when he fell off a ladder and landed head first in a water bucket.
 - v. Another man was killed by his own explosive while trying to steal from a condom dispenser.
 - vi. 150 die every year by falling coconuts.
 - vii. In 1975 a man named Alex Mitchell was laughing so hard at a TV show that he had a heart attack and died.
 - viii. 24 people are killed every year by champagne corks.
4. Some ways to die are better than others. Scientists have actually come up with a list of the 10 absolute worst ways to die according to science:
 - i. Starvation.
 - ii. Dehydration.
 - iii. Decapitation.
 - iv. Lethal injection.
 - v. Electric Chair.
 - vi. Crucifixion.
 - vii. Decompression.
 - viii. Burning.
 - ix. Radiation.
 - x. Scaphism. A form of execution designed by the Persians to inflict as much suffering as possible before death. The victim would be trapped inside two boats with just their head, hands, and feet protruding. They would be fed milk and honey until they develop horrible diarrhea. Then more milk and honey would be poured all over them. Particularly the eyes, mouth, and gentiles in order to attract insects. The boat would eventually fill up with more milk and honey, attracting more insects, who would gradually eat away at you. You would die from dehydration, starvation, exhaustion, and septic shock.

5. The Bible focuses on two ways you can die, and it says that you can choose how you die: In your sins, or in Christ.
 - i. In your sins.
 1. To die in your sins is to die with your sins unforgiven. It means you will face the penalty for your sins in the afterlife.
 - ii. In Christ.
 1. To die in Christ is to die as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Your sins are forgiven, and you will wake up from death to live in the presence of God forever in heaven.
6. In the following passage, Jesus is having a debate with the Jewish leaders. He has already claimed to be the light of the world, but they did not believe Him. We're going to see three ways to die in your sins.

II. TEXT: John 8:21-29

21 Then he said to them again, "I'm going away; you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come."

22 So the Jews said again, "He won't kill himself, will he, since he says, 'Where I'm going, you cannot come'?"

23 "You are from below," he told them, "I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins."

25 "Who are you?" they questioned.

"Exactly what I've been telling you from the very beginning," Jesus told them. 26 "I have many things to say and to judge about you, but the one who sent me is true, and what I have heard from him—these things I tell the world."

27 They did not know he was speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own. But just as the Father taught me, I say these things. 29 The one who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, because I always do what pleases him."

III. THREE WAYS TO DIE IN YOUR SINS

1. Self-righteousness.

- i. I looked up the definition of self-righteous, and it means "having or characterized by a certainty, especially an unfounded one, that is totally correct or morally superior." It is an ignorant confidence in one's own righteousness. It is the failure to see the log in your own eye. But I am using self-righteousness in a different way. It is depending on your own righteousness to get you into heaven. It is thinking you can be good enough, and that you are good enough to get to heaven.
- ii. **John 8:21** Then he said to them again, "I'm going away; you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I'm going, you cannot come."
- iii. "I'm going away." Jesus was referring to His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. And He said they cannot go with Him, because they

will die in their sins. Jesus knew that some of them would never believe in Him.

- iv. Notice their response in verse 22. So the Jews said again, “He won’t kill himself, will he, since he says, ‘Where I’m going, you cannot come?’”
- v. The Jews believed that suicide was one of the worst sins, reserved for the hottest part of hell. So, if they couldn’t go where Jesus was going, He must be referring to committing suicide and going to hell. They assumed that they were going to heaven. Why? Because they assumed they were righteous enough to deserve heaven. They were self-righteous.
- vi. Self-righteousness is depending on your own righteousness to earn your place in heaven. It is thinking that the way to heaven is by being good enough, and then believing that you are good enough. This was the attitude of the Jewish leaders.
- vii. Four problems with self-righteousness:
 - 1. The Bible says that we are saved by faith, not works. **Ephesians 2:8-9** “8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift— 9 not from works, so that no one can boast.”
 - 2. To be righteous enough for heaven, you must be perfect. **Galatians 3:10** “10 For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, because it is written, Everyone who does not do everything written in the book of the law is cursed.”
 - 3. No one is righteous. **Romans 3:23** “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
 - 4. The Bible condemns self-righteousness. **Galatians 5:4** “You who are trying to be justified by the law are alienated from Christ; you have fallen from grace.”
- viii. If you die in a state of self-righteousness, then you will die in your sins and go to hell.
- ix. How can you tell if you are self-righteous? Answer this question: Why should God let you into heaven? If your answer points to your performance, then you are self-righteous.
- x. If we can’t earn our way to heaven by good works, then how do we get to heaven? By receiving God’s forgiveness. Good people don’t go to heaven; forgiven people do. How do we receive God’s forgiveness? By believing in Jesus Christ – that He came to earth and died in our place for our sins. **Acts 10:43** “All the prophets testify about him that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins.”
- xi. To go to heaven we must have the righteousness of Christ. Jesus Christ was absolutely perfect. When we put our faith in His death for our sins, His

righteousness is imputed to us. God forgives us and treats us as if we were as righteous as Christ.

2. Worldliness.

- i. **John 8:23** “You are from below,” he told them, “I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.”
- ii. Jesus told them that their problem was worldliness.
- iii. The Greek word Jesus uses for “world” here is *kosmos*. It is used in three ways in the NT.
 1. First, it can simply mean the planet that we live, that God created. **John 1:10** “He was in the world, and the world was created through him, and yet the world did not recognize him.”
 2. Second, it can mean all the people in the world – the human race. **John 3:16** “For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”
 3. Third, it can mean “the invisible spiritual system of evil dominated by Satan and all that it offers in opposition to God, His word, and His people (MacArthur).” It is “the system of evil that opposes the kingdom of God (MacArthur).” It is controlled by Satan, and it consists of unbelievers who hate God and His followers. This is the meaning of the word here in John 8:23.
 - a. **John MacArthur** “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.”
 - b. **NLT Study Bible** “The world consists of society that is opposed to God and His kingdom.”
 - c. **NIV Study Bible** “the world, or realm, of sin, which is controlled by Satan and organized against God and righteousness.”
 - d. **Reformation Study Bible** “The world is the system of rebellion and pride that seeks to displace God and His rule.”
 - e. **Transformation Study Bible** “Satan’s system for opposing the work of Christ on earth.”
- iv. John describes the world in this way. **1 John 2:16** “For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one’s possessions—is not from the Father, but is from the world.”
 1. The lust of the flesh. Craving for physical pleasure. A preoccupation with gratifying physical desires.

2. The lust of the eyes. Coveting and accumulating things. Bowing to the god of materialism.
 3. The pride in one's possessions. Obsession with one's status or importance.
- v. The Bible warns against worldliness. It says that worldliness is a sign that you are not saved. It is a sign that you will die in your sins rather than in Christ.
 - vi. **1 John 2:15** "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."
 - vii. Worldliness is a preoccupation with this world – physical pleasure, material possessions, impressing people. The challenge of worldliness is that you can be very worldly without obvious disobedience to God's commands. You can be very worldly without stealing, lying, adultery, dishonoring your parents. And so it can be very hard to detect in yourself.
 - viii. What are some signs that you are worldly?
 1. As your income increases, so does your spending.
 2. You are always upgrading.
 3. You flaunt your wealth.
 4. You struggle with and alcohol abuse, or sexual sin, or unhealthy eating.
 5. You struggle with discontentment.
 6. You're not generous.
 7. You're dating an unbeliever, or your best friends are unbelievers.
 8. The world loves you.
 9. You're not evangelistic.
 10. You most respect people of great beauty, wealth, or talent.

3. Unbelief.

- i. **John 8:24** "Therefore I told you that you will die in your sins. For if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins."
- ii. Jesus couldn't be more direct and clear. If you don't believe that "I am he, you will die in your sins."
- iii. The Bible is very clear that they way to eternal life is to faith in Jesus Christ.
 1. **John 1:12** "But to all who did receive him, he gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in his name,"
 2. **John 3:16** "For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."
 3. **John 3:36** "The one who believes in the Son has eternal life, but the one who rejects the Son will not see life; instead, the wrath of God remains on him."

- iv. What are to believe about Jesus to be saved? Jesus said that you must believe that “I am he.” This could point to a couple of things.
 - 1. It could refer back to **John 8:12** “I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.” To the Jews, “the light” was a reference to God, and to the promised Messiah. So, Jesus was declaring that He was both God and Messiah, and here He was saying that if you want to be saved from spiritual death, then you must embrace Him as the light – both God and Messiah.
 - 2. It could be a direct claim to deity. In Exodus 3:14, when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, God told Moses that His name was “I am who I am.” When that verse was translated into the Greek Septuagint (3rd and 2nd centuries), the Jewish scholars used the phrase *ego eimi*. Here in John 8:24, Jesus used that same phrase. “For if you don’t not believe that I am he (literally “I am,” *ego eimi*), you will die in your sins.” So, Jesus was saying that you must believe that He is God in human flesh; God incarnate.
- v. **MacArthur** “To be a Christian one must believe the full biblical revelation about Jesus: that He is the eternal second person of the Trinity, that He entered space and time as God incarnate, that He was born of a virgin, that He lived a sinless life, that His death on the cross is the only sufficient, substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of all who would ever believe in Him, that He rose from the dead and ascended to the Father in heaven, that He now intercedes for His own redeemed people, and that He will one day return in glory.”
- vi. What we see here is that the one unforgivable sin is unbelief in Jesus Christ. Heaven will be filled with sinners – liars, thieves, adulterers, fornicators, pedophiles, homosexuals – all those who have confessed their sins and looked to Jesus Christ for forgiveness. But hell will be empty of unbelievers. It’s the one sin that cannot be forgiven. If you reject Christ, you will indeed die in your sins.
- vii. Notice here that salvation is presented as conditional. Jesus holds out the condition. If you want to be saved, you must believe in him. This is where Calvinism fails to make sense. They would agree that salvation is conditional, but God only gives some the ability to meet this condition. Therefore, hell is populated not with people don’t believe in Christ, but people who are unable to believe in Christ. But if this the case, then it is God’s fault that people go to hell. People go to hell because God doesn’t give them an opportunity to be saved. This doesn’t add up. Arminianism is a better explanation of the Scriptures. If salvation is conditional upon belief, then it follows that God gives us the ability to believe. When the gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit

draws us to God, opens our eyes, and enables us to believe. If we do not resist this drawing, then we will be saved. If we do resist God's drawing and reject Jesus Christ, then we will die in our sins.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. I don't know when you are going to die, or how. But I know that you can either die in Christ, or in your sins. And the choice is yours. All you have to do is make a decision today to repent of your sins and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. He promises to save you; to forgive your sins; and to grant you eternal life which will begin the moment after death.
2. **Thomas Watson** "O you saints, desire death; it is your ascension-day to heaven."