

Sunday, April 2, 2023 am

Dying in Sin

John 8:21-24

In John 8 we find Jesus declares that He is “the Light of the world” and calls for men to follow Him (8:12). As was typically the case, the Pharisees (and perhaps other Jewish leaders) rejected His message. This will lead to our text (21-24) where Jesus notes that He would be going away, but where He was going they would not be able to go with Him. Jesus here is likely speaking of His leaving this earth and going to heaven. Of course, the religious leaders fail to comprehend what He is saying which leads Jesus to expose their worldly ways. He noted that they were of the world, and because of this they would die in their sins.

In this lesson I want to focus on an expression, “You will die in your sins” (21, 24). 3 times in 2 verses, Jesus uttered that phrase to the Pharisees. There are some things to consider in this text about these corrupt leaders. 1) They had witnessed many of the things Jesus had said and done; 2) They were religious, knew who God was and knew His laws (even though they clearly manipulated the LOM to suit what they wanted and often ignored it). YET Jesus warned them that they would die in their sins.

The Pharisees were not the only ones to die in their sins. Every day countless souls die, unprepared and in their sins? Why do people die in their sins? In this lesson I would like to consider a few reasons.

I. Within context

a. Because of unbelief – John 8:24

- i. This was the contextual cause of their condemnation. Continually they rejected Jesus’ teachings. John is clear in not only pointing this out, but also noting the case that Jesus made to prove His truthfulness. But the truth is they were not interested in considering what He said and did. Thus, because of this hardened state, they WOULD die in their sins.
- ii. Unbelief can come in many ways: Rejection of the existence of God and Jesus, rejection of the Bible as being God’s word, rejection of certain principles and commands, or just simply refusing to obey what you know to be right, etc.
- iii. Many today will die in their sins because of unbelief. Mark 16:16, John 3:18, 36. Hebrews 3:12 – this can even apply to brethren. They can fall away by refusing to continue to follow the Lord.

b. Because of worldliness – John 8:23.

- i. A simple definition of worldliness is one who chooses live by the ways of the world in contrast with God’s ways.
- ii. In our text Jesus noted they were of this world. He was speaking of the way they lived their lives. They put their personal desires above God’s desires. They professed to know God, but in works they denied Him (2 Timothy 3:5, Titus 1:16).
- iii. The Bible is clear that you cannot love the world and God at the same time – James 4:4, Matthew 6:24, 1 John 2:15-17.
- iv. Sadly, like the Jewish leaders that rejected Jesus (and God) on that occasion, many today choose the world instead of God. Why? John 3:19-21 - men loved darkness rather than light. They do not want to give up sinful practices or worldly pursuits to be pleasing to God.
- v. AND again, believers can return to the world and die in their sins – Luke 8:14 – the thorny soil was those who received the word, but the “cares, riches and pleasures of life” choked out the word of God. Luke 9:62 speaks of those putting their hand to the plow and looking back being unfit for the kingdom of God. 2 Peter 2:20-22 speaks of the later and worse state of those who are again entangled in the world and overcome. The problem: While they might believe in God, they do not believe Him enough to surrender to Him. James 1:27

describes “pure and defiled religion” and it involves keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.

c. Because of ignorance –

- i. The Jews who confronted Jesus were willfully ignorant. They had stopped their ears and shut their eyes, lest they should see (Matthew 13:15). Romans 10:1-3 later finds Paul describing them as being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and establishing their own righteousness, whereby they did not submit to the righteousness of God. John 15:21-22, Jesus would later declare, *But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.*
- ii. Hosea 4:6 noted of Israel of old, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.”
- iii. Whether willful or otherwise, ignorance is a dangerous place to be, especially when the soul is involved. Sadly, many in our world CHOOSE to be ignorant, Cf. Romans 1:28 – they did not like to retain God in their knowledge...
- iv. There are many who think they are saved but they have not obeyed God’s word. Matthew 7:21-23. Paul, in ignorance persecuted Christians thinking he was pleasing God – but he was not (1 Timothy 1:13 – his former conduct was in ignorance; Acts 26:9, he “*thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth...*”
- v. John 8:31-32, in His follow-up discussion Jesus noted, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.” What is the answer to ignorance? It is knowing the truth. That is why we must continually study God’s word with a good and honest heart (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- vi. But sadly, because of ignorance, many will die in their sins.

II. Other reasons people die in their sins

a. Because they procrastinate.

- i. There are many who know they need to change, but they put it off until a later date. They think they have plenty of time.
- ii. The Bible gives examples of this: Felix trembled at the preaching of Paul – Acts 24:25; Acts 26:28 – Agrippa put off obedience if he was interested at all (“You almost persuade me to be a Christian”); Matthew 25:1-13 gives the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. The foolish virgins delayed to prepare for the bridegroom. When he came, they were unprepared; Luke 9:59-62 finds people putting off following the Lord by making excuses – “Let me first go and bury my father” and “Let me first go and tell my family farewell.” Jesus answered and noted, *“No one, having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.”*
- iii. 2 Corinthians 6:2 tells us that now is the time, now is the day of salvation. Ephesians 5:15-16 in a roundabout way challenges us not to procrastinate noting we are to redeem the time.
- iv. IF you have sin in your life and you put it off, you may die in your sins. The sad reality is that many keep putting it off until it is too late.

b. Because life is uncertain.

- i. Related to the previous point, we must remind ourselves that life is uncertain. While we may have plenty of time, or so we think, we never know.
- ii. James 4:14 describes our life as a vapor...; Hebrews 9:27 – notes that it is appointed for man to die once...; Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes dealt with this continually. His main reason for declaring life as vanity (emptiness, grasping for the wind, vapor, etc.) is the realization we will all die, and we do NOT know how long we have in this life. Ecclesiastes 8:8 says, *No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, And no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war, And wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.*

- iii. We see and hear about it everyday. People of all ages pass to face God for eternity. Criminal behaviors, accidents, disasters and disease. They all claim lives far before its time. And no matter who we are or what we do, we are not guaranteed even one more day.
 - iv. BUT, if we are unprepared, when that day comes, we will die in our sins.
- c. Because they fail to take care of their sins**
- i. Considering all the above reasons why people die in sin, it boils down to this. They have not done what is necessary to take care of their sins.
 - ii. God has provided a plan – Romans 5:8-9. Jesus died for our sins. That is the message of John 3:16, etc. If we have sin in our lives, the ONLY way to die without sin is to take care of it. Yet many do not so.
 - iii. If one has never obeyed the gospel, you need to become a Christian. Acts 22:16, 2:38. Romans 10:9-10, etc. It is through obeying the gospel that one puts on Christ (Galatians 3:27).
 - iv. If you are a Christian, and walking in sin, you need to repent, confess, and pray. 1 John 1:7-9 addresses this, as does the example of Simon the sorcerer in Acts 8:22.

And thus we can see the need to take care of our sins, lest we die in our sins. So, instead of dying in sin, let me encourage you to die TO sin by obeying the gospel. John 8:24 – it hinges on believing in Him, even as Jesus told the Pharisees on that occasion. We need to put to death that old man of sin and in baptism be raise to walk in newness of life - Romans 6:1-7, 2 Corinthians 5:17 – if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation...; Revelation 22:17, *And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.* The invitation is extended to whosoever will. What about you? Think about it!