

An Exposition of the  
**GOSPEL OF JOHN**



## “The Death of the Dead”

*John 8:21-30*

**Theme:** New birth comes only through faith in Christ and trust in what God has accomplished.

**Introduction: [Read text]** There are few realities more sobering than death. We are familiar with physical death—it is visible, unavoidable, and final in this life. But Scripture speaks of a far more tragic condition than the death of the body: the death of the soul. A person may be breathing, thinking, working, and religious—yet spiritually dead before God.

In John 8, Jesus confronts the religious leaders of Israel with words that cut through their confidence and expose their true condition. They believed they were alive to God, secure in their heritage and righteousness. Yet Jesus declares that they are lost, separated from God, and heading toward eternal judgment. His words reveal a terrifying truth: it is possible to be physically alive and spiritually dead, morally active and eternally lost, religious and yet condemned.

At the same time, Jesus does not merely diagnose the disease—He reveals the only cure. Spiritual death is not overcome by heritage, morality, or religion. It is overcome only through new birth, which comes through faith in Christ and trust in what God has accomplished through Him. In this passage, Christ exposes the reality of spiritual death, explains its cause, and proclaims the only remedy.

As we consider Jesus' words, we are forced to ask the most important question of all: Are we truly alive to God, or are we among the dead who do not yet know it?

Today, we will see three truths from John 8:21–30:

1. The Reality of Spiritual Death – 8:21
2. The Reasons for Spiritual Death – 8:22–25
3. The Remedy for Spiritual Death – 8:26–30

### I. The Reality of Spiritual Death – 8:21

#### A. The Despair of the Spiritually Dead

1. Those who are estranged from God and suffering from eternal death are most pitiable – they are judged by God and simply don't realize it – cp. *John 3:18; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:3*.
2. Jesus addresses those in this section who are in just such a condition – they are unaware of the fact that they are not only spiritually dead, but are headed for certain condemnation – “*Then He said again to them, ‘I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin;’*”
3. Jesus refers to his death, burial, resurrection, and ascension back into glory through the phrase: “*I go away.*”

4. Even as I will face death triumphantly, you will also face death to the opposite result – amid your dying, “***you will seek ...***” the grace and mercy that I’ve come to offer, but will not find it
5. It will not be available because it is only found in Christ Jesus, and those who reject Christ have already rejected the supply of God’s grace.
6. Instead of the blessing of victory over sin and death, you “***will die in your sin.***”
7. In death, those who refuse to trust in Christ Jesus will pass through the “valley of the shadow of death” alone – experiencing no comfort and no peace of any kind; only dark despair.

## B. The Destiny of the Spiritually Dead

1. He clarifies the issue: “***Where I am going, you cannot come.***”
2. The words Jesus uses here are “***cannot come***” [οὐ δύνασθε ἔλθεῖν], because the holiness of God makes it impossible: that which is corrupt and vile cannot dwell with Him.
3. Instead of enjoying the presence of God and His Son, sinful men who do not have the life given through faith in Jesus Christ have nowhere to go except to their own place – cp. [\*\*\*Acts 1:25\*\*\*](#).
4. Thus, if one is not granted entry into the presence of a holy God through the work of grace accomplished by Christ, they are banished from the presence of God into eternal judgment – [\*\*\*John 14:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9\*\*\*](#).

## II. The Reasons for Spiritual Death – 8:22-25

### A. The Presumption of Sinners – v. 22

1. The first reason that these religious sinners’ situation was so bad is because of their presupposition of Innocence.
2. Instead of grasping the tragedy of their condemned condition, they assume that their situation was proper and that Jesus is the pitiable one – “***So the Jews were saying, ‘Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come?’’***”
3. They could not conceive of Jesus being exclusively righteous, while they were disqualified because of their sin.
4. There is an air of sarcasm and ridicule in their statement, dismissing Jesus’ assertions because they presuppose themselves to be righteous enough through their own efforts to gain favor with God.
5. This same presupposition damns many – even today.

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**B. The Perspective of Sinners – *vv. 23***

1. This presupposition of righteousness reveals a perspective that is foreign to the perspective of Heaven – *“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’.”*
2. Their theology of redemption reflects a hellish origin – “I can gain the favor of God through my own efforts.”
3. Jesus declares that such a perspective is “of this world,” not “from above” – cp. *John 15:19*.

**C. The Prejudice of Sinners – *v. 24***

1. Those who persist in their unbelief and rejection of God’s Son will die in their sins, unpardoned, unfit for heaven, unprepared to meet the very One they reject.
2. The unbelievers’ rejection of Christ reveals a prejudice that results in condemnation – *“There I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”*
3. To refuse to trust Christ to cleanse you from all offense before God and to forgive your sin is to reject the provision of God.
4. To reject the provision of God is to reject God Himself, which results in the elimination of the only source of hope.

**D. The Priority of Sinners – *v. 25***

1. Sinners who reject Christ do so out of a willful ignorance – a desire to avoid the clear truth of Who Christ is.
2. In response to Jesus’ confrontation, stating: “unless you believe that I am He ...” they ask, *“Who are You?”*
3. They have had 2 ½ years of listening to the preaching of Jesus – they refused to acknowledge what He has been teaching
4. Jesus replies by asking: *“What have I been saying to you from the beginning?”*
5. They did not lack information, knowledge, or understanding – they lacked a desire to be right with God – cp. *John 3:19-20*.

**III. The Remedy for Spiritual Death – 8:26-30**

**A. The Attentiveness to the Words of Christ – *vv. 26-27***

1. Jesus immediately embarks on yet another explanation of the gospel – indicating that to be right with God, a person must be willing to listen to His Words – something these religious people refused to do
2. He says, *“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.”*
3. Jesus’ patience in withholding judgment is here demonstrated as He is restrained by the Father’s will that the Gospel be provided to the world so that they might be saved – cp. [2 Peter 3:9](#).
4. Once again, Jesus calls our attention back to His Word and what He says – the message is simple if men will listen.
5. These people – in their unbelief and hardness of heart – miss it altogether: *“They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father.”*
6. The religious knowledge of these men did not translate into spiritual understanding; their perspectives conflicted with that which is true, despite their claims of godliness and faith.
7. Jesus’ entire life on earth was lived so that sinful men and women, boys and girls could be reconciled to the Father, Who *“is true.”*
8. He came to make peace – through the cross and with His Word – but it is necessary that men hear the message of reconciliation and believe in Christ Jesus.

## B. Acceptance of the Work of Christ – *v. 28-29*

1. Not only is it necessary to listen to the Word of Christ, but it is also necessary to accept the work of Christ as well.
2. He declares about His cross: *“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.”*
3. This is all the plan and will of the Father who sent Him – *“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.”*
4. For Jesus to willingly lay down His life for sinners pleased the Father – cp. [Isaiah 53:10](#).
5. It is necessary for all men to believe what Jesus declares and trust what He did in order to be saved – [John 6:40](#).

So What?

1. **What are some ways that self-confidence, tradition, or morality can subtly mimic**

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**genuine spiritual life?**

- 2. How has my faith in Christ reshaped my allegiance, desires, and obedience?**
- 3. What fuels my worship, humility, and obedience to Christ Jesus?**

**Theme: New birth comes only through faith in Christ and trust in what God has accomplished.**