

I. Knowing yet not knowing. Being confident the Father is with us.

A. John 8:21-30 . . . Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." [22] So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?" [23] 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. [24] Therefore 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." [25] So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning? [26] 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." [27] They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. [28] So Jesus 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. [29] 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." [30] As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

B. Prayer

II. Knowing yet not knowing

A. John 8:21 . . . Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

1. This conversation was primarily between Jesus and the Pharisees.
 - a. And as we know from history, the Pharisees were thorough in their theology, well-read in the scriptures, highly educated in matters of the Law, and zealous in their religious practices.
 - b. And yet, Jesus says that even though they will seek Him, they will die in their sin. So how is it that such zealously religious people could be seeking the Messiah and still die as sinners condemned to eternal hell?

2. The primary problem with the Pharisees – as is the problem with many today – and sadly, even in the church – is that they wanted to be saved from the earthly and eternal consequences of their own sin, and they wanted to be saved from the generational and current

effects of other's sins on them, and they wanted to be saved from Rome's rule over them, BUT they did not want to be saved from their own evil desires and the practice of selectively particular sins they deemed too profitable or pleasurable to give up.

- a. So yes, they wanted to be saved, but they did not want God's salvation. And they would continue looking for the expected Messiah, even after Jesus left the earth, but they were not looking for God's Messiah.
 - b. And of course we know they were not looking for God's Messiah because He was standing in their midst at that very moment – and they were rejecting Him as the Messiah God would send.
 - c. You see, they were looking for a Messiah who would satisfy their desires, fit into their plans, and make life go the way they wanted it to go.
3. Therefore, it wasn't that they couldn't recognize Jesus as God's Messiah – any more than people today can't recognize Jesus as God's savior. Their problem was an unwillingness to recognize God's Messiah. And it was for this reason that Jesus went on to say that they would die in their sin. In other words, they would die living a selfish, prideful, unmerciful, unjust, and unfaithful way of life from which they did not want to be saved.
 - a. It is for this reason that Jesus said that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20).
 - b. And this is the reason John said in 1 John 3:7-10, "Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; [8] the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. [9] No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. [10] By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."
 4. The point here is that Bible knowledge, theological knowledge, and a claim to believe in Jesus is not enough to save us. Saving faith is faith the lives according to what Jesus says about how we are to live as well as trusting in His redeeming work on the cross. This is why saving faith is life-changing faith that affects our outward behavior, our thoughts and desires, and what is in our heart.

5. Does the fact that Jesus said these Pharisees would die in their sin doom them from that moment on? NO! Like every other person in this world, as long as we are alive and able to think rationally, we can repent; we can put our faith in Jesus Christ; we can go forward living the rest of our time on earth in obedience and love – whether we live a few more moments or years.
 - a. Jesus confirms this in vs 24, "Therefore 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."
 - b. The important truth here is that we do not die in our sin because we lack the ability or opportunity to believe that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him. We die in our sin because we want to sin more than we want to trust God and live according to God's will and word.
 6. Jesus concludes vs 21 by saying, "Where I am going, you cannot come."
 - a. Jesus was returning to heaven, and without a saving faith in Jesus that works itself out in how we live day by day, we cannot go where Jesus has gone any more than those Pharisees could.
 - b. But those who do believe in Jesus Christ for salvation from the power, practice, and penalty of sin have these words of assurance from Jesus, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. [3] If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3).
- B. John 8:22 . . . So the Jews were saying, "Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"
1. It is most likely that these Jews were mocking Jesus, for to them, suicide was a great evil that was punished by being sent to hell. And of course, they were confident they were going to heaven.
- C. John 8:23-24 . . . And [Jesus] was saying to them, "You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. [24]Therefore 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."
1. We have already covered the fact that these Pharisees were thinking and speaking from a worldly, fleshly, temporal perspective. What Jesus is saying about them being from below conveys the same idea.

2. But this fact should make us pause and think about ourselves. We may be convinced we are on our way to heaven, but there is a question we should ask ourselves more than once, and that question is: "Where is my heart? Is it above or below?" And why should we ask ourselves this question? Because Jesus said that where your treasure is there your heart will be also.
 - a. In other words, do you treasure heaven so much that you wish you could go there now, instead of having to wait until you die? Or do you want to go to heaven when you die – but not now because you don't want to leave all the treasures and pleasures you are enjoying here below?
 - b. Though the following words are not from the Bible, they do express an attitude that all God's children should have: "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through. My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door and I can't feel at home in this world anymore."
 - c. Where is your heart? What is your attitude?
 3. In vs 21, Jesus used the singular form of the word sin – indicating that they would die as unjustified, unsaved sinners. Here in vs 24, Jesus uses the plural form of the word sin – indicating that they will die in their sin because they continued to willfully practice sin.
 4. This truth, that one will die in his sin because he continues to willfully practice sin – in spite of his religious practices – is affirmed by Jesus in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. [22] Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' [23] And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"
- D. John 8:25 . . . So they were saying to Him, "Who are You?" Jesus said to them, "What have I been saying to you from the beginning?
1. Or in other words, Jesus is saying that if these Pharisees had been listening and had really wanted to know who He was, they would already know because He is the same person He has been claiming to be from the start.
 2. How often do you listen, not to understand what the speaker is saying and why the speaker is saying it, but to respond by defending yourself or attacking the speaker and his message? Every time you listen to

defend or attack – rather than understand, you are acting just like these Pharisees who were intent on rejecting Jesus and His message because He was a threat to what they wanted.

3. Our goal as Christians ought to be to listen to understand what the other person is saying and why they are saying it. Then, we can proceed to consider what response we will make.
- E. Following Jesus' response to their question about who He was, Jesus goes on to say (vs 26) that He has many things to say to them about their attitudes, thinking, beliefs, and behavior, and many things to judge them for, but now is not the time. Now is the time to do what the only true God has sent Him to say to the world and do for the world.
- F. John 8:27-28 . . . They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father (*God*). [28] So Jesus 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.
 1. The first thing I want to point out about these words from Jesus is that He is identifying how He will die and who will kill Him.
 2. The second thing I want to point out is that in killing Jesus, these religious leaders would be ridding themselves of an imminent threat to their position of prestige, power, and influence. But in getting rid of one thing, that is Jesus, they would bring upon themselves several other things they would not want.
 3. For example, they would be bringing upon themselves the guilt of despising, rejecting, and ultimately killing God's Messiah, who is also the son of God.
 - a. They would be setting themselves up to having to face the truth about what they had done to Jesus and the truth about who Jesus is. In other words, whether upon putting Jesus to death, or following Jesus' death and resurrection, or at the Judgment Seat of God, they would see and understand the truth about Jesus, and what they did to Jesus for their own sake.
 - b. And finally, they would have to accept the fact that Jesus was sent by God, and He only said and did what God commanded Him to do.
 4. I suspect that at the final judgment we will all come face-to-face with the truth about ourselves, about how we have treated God, and about how we have treated others. May we be wise enough to face those truths in this life and do the right thing about them while we can.

III. How to be confident God is with us and we are safe in His hands

- A. John 8:29 . . . 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."
 - 1. This is a profound statement for two reasons.
 - a. First, this statement is profound because it tells us in clear and concise terms when or under what conditions we have the right to be confident God is with us.
 - b. The second reason this statement is profound is because, if God is with us, we have every reason to believe, or to be confident we are safe and secure in His hands.
 - 2. As I just said, the first reason this statement is profound is because it tells us in clear and concise terms when or under what conditions we have the right to be confident God is with us.
 - a. In our day, it is common for Christians to assure each other of God's personal presence by referencing scripture verses and using theological terms that speak of God's general presence with everyone, or by taking scripture statements about God's personal presence out of context.
 - (1) For example, it is common to assure each other that God will never desert us, nor will He ever forsake us so that we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid" (Hebrews 13:5-6).
 - (2) However, these words are in the midst of a section that begins with "*Let love of the brethren continue,*" and ends with "*Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you*" (Hebrews 13:1-17).
 - (3) So lifting part of a truth out of a section that presents a whole truth may comfort us, but it is not what the scripture says.
 - b. And returning to Jesus' words, I want to point that He did not reference any OT promises, or well-accepted Jewish theology, or even the fact that He was God's son as a reason to be confident God was with Him and had not left Him alone.
 - 3. Instead, Jesus made it clear that His confidence in the presence of God being with Him was based on always doing the things that are pleasing to God. And the word "always" is important, even if we only get close to always.
 - 4. Now should you think this truth applies to Jesus alone, let me remind of Jesus' words to us regarding God being with us.

- a. John 14:15-17 . . . “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. [16] I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; [17] that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.
- b. John 14:23 . . . “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”
- 5. And long before Jesus said these words, the Psalmist wrote, “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? [4] He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. [5] He shall receive a blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalm 24:3-5).

IV. Conclusion

- A. We believe God is present everywhere, which is why we have given God the label of Omnipresent. And we believe God’s omnipresence is a manifestation of His grace and love.
 - 1. But we also believe that God’s gracious omnipresence does not mean He is personally and intimately present in everyone’s life.
 - 2. So how do we come to have a rational and reasonable confidence that God is personally and intimately with us and will not leave us?
 - a. Unlike Jesus, we must first repent and believe in Jesus.
 - b. And then – like Jesus – we must intentionally live a life that is pleasing to God, that is, a life that intentionally and persistently keeps His commandments and lives according to His will.
 - 3. When we do this, we have every reason to be confident – not just know or not just claim – but be confident that God is with us and that He will not leave us alone whatever the circumstances or however people behave.

- B. John 8:30 . . . As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.