

Christ, the Light of the World

By David Harrell

Bible Text: John 8:12-21
Preached on: Sunday, August 17, 2014

It is my solemn responsibility and great joy to preach the word of God to you and this morning we will continue our study in John's gospel so I would invite you to take your Bibles and turn to John chapter 8 and this morning we will be examining verses 12-21. Let me read the text to you,

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the Light of life." 13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true." 14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. 15 You people judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the He who sent Me. 17 Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. 18 I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." 19 So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come. 21 Then He said again to them, "I go away, and you shall seek Me, and shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come."

Light is the single most important source of energy and heat on the earth. In fact, it is the very essence of God who the Apostle Paul tells us, "dwells in unapproachable light." Physicists tell us that the human eye cannot see light, it is energy. It is completely invisible to us. All we see is this energy interacting with tiny particles of matter in the air that reflect it and they tell us that in the vast energy spectrum of light, the human eye is only able to see that portion of it that would account for about 1/1000th of 1%. Physically speaking, a world without light is a world without life. The same is true spiritually and even as we can only see 1/1000th of a percent of the spectrum of light, so too we can only see a very miniscule part of the Creator of light, the source of light, the Lord our God. We only see a little of him in creation, only a little of him in his word, only a little of him in the Lord Jesus Christ. Even as we think about what we see physically with all the beauty, all of the colors, the magnificence of it all, in that tiny portion of that light spectrum, can you imagine what it will be like some day when we can see fully the glory of God?

Because we need light in order to exist, we read in Genesis 1, verse 1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness

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was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness He called night." Even as physical life cannot exist apart from light, so too spiritual life cannot exist apart from spiritual light, therefore, God has given us that light in his Son and in his word. As we look at Scripture, we see that the emblem of light is used to describe life, truth, holiness, happiness, the glory of heaven and on and on while the figure of darkness is used to describe the opposite: ignorance, error, guilt, depravity, desperation, misery, death. It is even used to describe hell itself which Jesus described as a place of "outer darkness" in Matthew 8:12, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Spiritually we live in a very dark world, don't we? We know biblically that this world is temporarily ruled by Satan the prince of darkness, in fact, his kingdom is called the domain of darkness and those who reject Christ are Satan's unwitting followers who are incarcerated in this kingdom of darkness, this domain of darkness, though they grope about in darkness, in ignorance, in misery, in depravity. This is described in Proverbs 2:13 as those who "leave the paths of uprightness to walk the ways of darkness." But certainly no rational person would say that they want to live in total physical darkness yet those who reject the light of Christ, actually prefer spiritual darkness and for this reason they are judged. Jesus said in John 3:19, "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil." Like blind men, unbelievers fumble their way through life falling over every imaginable obstacle until finally they fall headlong into the darkness of their grave and ultimately into the outer darkness of an eternal hell. Proverbs 4:19 says, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know over what they stumble." Jesus said in John 12:35, "He who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes." The Apostle Paul describes Satan in 2 Corinthians 4:4, as "the god of this world who blinds the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ."

Even so, man is not acquitted by this blindness before a holy God. In Romans 1:21, we are told that "even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was darkened." The darkness of spiritual blindness has led to unimaginable heartache. We've all experienced that in our families, in our communities, in our nation and in our world. Simple man is capable of every imaginable atrocity, what Scripture calls "the unfruitful deeds of darkness," Ephesians 5:11. It is no accident that the barbaric Muslim murderers called ISIS wear black and raise a black flag of Jihad. These demonic men who hang and crucify Christian men and rape the women and behead children in the name of Allah. In fact, Mohammed said, "If you see the black flags coming from Khurasan, join that army

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even if you have to crawl over ice for that is the army of the Imam Al-Mahdi and no one can stop that army until it reaches Jerusalem."

If I can digress for a moment, that army will be stopped says the Lord our God, when his fury will mount up in unimaginable anger. We read about it in Scripture, especially in Ezekiel chapter 38 and 39. There we read that he will destroy these armies on the mountains of Israel and he will feed their bodies to the predatory birds. In fact, the slaughter will be so great we are told that he will take seven months for Israel to bury the dead and cleanse the land. According to Ezekiel 39:7, God says, "My holy name I shall make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I shall not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel." And in verses 21 and 22 he goes on to say, "And I shall set My glory among the nations; and all the nations will see My judgment which I have executed and My hand which I have laid on them. And the house of Israel will know that I am the LORD their God from that day onward." Beloved, this speaks of the glorious reign of the Lord Jesus Christ when he comes again in power and great glory.

My friends, we have no hope of life apart from the light of Christ who entered this black, sinful world. We know according to Scripture that he is the eternal, the self-existent source of all light and life who came to this earth even according to Isaiah's prophecy that we read about in Matthew 4:14, "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned." Light is a fitting metaphor to describe the Lord Jesus Christ who says here in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life." This metaphor of light used to describe our precious Savior is steeped in Old Testament allusions and provides great insight for us into God's eternal plan of redemption. We know that God is an infinite Spirit and in Scripture whenever he materialized himself, he did so in glorious light, what the Hebrews called the Shekinah which means the radiance of his presence. This was a resplendent, brilliant, dazzling, unapproachable light. The prophet Daniel tells us that he emanates light without shadow and that light dwells with him, Daniel 2:22. In Psalm 104:2, we read that "He covers himself with light as with a garment." And in his vision, Ezekiel was allowed to see the glory of God upon his throne and the radiance of that glory refracting from him. In chapter 1, verse 4, he says, "Then I looked and behold a whirlwind was coming out of the north, a great cloud with raging fire engulfing itself and brightness was all around it and radiating out of the midst of the fire."

As I said earlier, the Apostle Paul describes Christ Jesus to Timothy as "dwelling in unapproachable light whom no man has seen nor can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power," 1 Timothy 6:16. John tells us in 1 John 1:5, that "God is light and in him is no darkness at all." James tells us in 1:17, that he is the "Father of lights with

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whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." The ineffable dazzling brilliance of the light of God's presence was a frightening mystery in the Old Testament. Let me remind you of it for a moment. When God materialized himself in the Garden with Adam and Eve, we are told that he walked with them in the cool of the day and they saw the presence of God. No doubt it was this light that we can't fully imagine. There was sweet fellowship until sin entered and at that point, they refused to give God glory and the light of his presence would have consumed him had he not separated himself from them so we read how God removes them from the Garden and he placed angels with flaming swords to keep them out which was really an act of divine mercy to protect them from being consumed or vaporized. So there we begin to see how sin separates man from God and he removes man from his holy presence and yet grace immediately begins to pursue. Grace immediately begins to pursue man and bring back that glorious presence. We read about it coming back again in Exodus 13 where God's presence comes along and leads his covenant people, Israel, through the wilderness of Sinai. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Then in Exodus 40, we read about the tabernacle, how it was erected at the foot of Mount Sinai. The 12 tribes encamped around it in such a way as to always be able to see the tabernacle and the presence of the glory of God radiating from within the Holy of Holies, a sign that his presence was with them. That glory hovered between the cherubim over the Mercy Seat that divided the presence of God from the Ark of the Covenant that contained the violated law written upon the tablets of stone.

But the people still refused to remain faithful and we begin to see this cycle of sin develop again throughout that history. We see sin and separation and then finally repentance and forgiveness and then the glory returns. We saw that in 1 Kings 8. Remember, Solomon then built a permanent temple and we read how the glory of the Lord came and filled the house of the Lord. It was so magnificent that the priests were unable to even minister so the Shekinah presence of our glorious God comes back again, it returns again, frankly reminding us that worship is all about giving God glory. In effect, what he was saying is, "Will you will obey me now?" Well, for a while the answer was yes but sin continued to do its work. So we read in Ezekiel 8 through chapter 10 a description of the hideous corruption of idolatry among the people of Israel. Ezekiel describes the Shekinah of God's presence gradually departing. Ichabod, which means the glory has departed. We read in that section of Scripture how the Shekinah rose from between the cherubim and it hovered for a while over the threshold of the Temple court and then it began to move towards the eastern gate of the Lord's house which by the way, would be the same gate from which the Savior would depart when he was rejected. In Ezekiel 11:23 we read, "The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood over the mountain which is east of the city," which refers to the Mount of Olives. My friends, this is the precise sequence of the departure of his glorious presence that will be reversed when he returns again in power and great glory.

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For 500 years there was no sign of the presence of God. No glory. There were no angels. And then suddenly the celestial brilliance of his glory returns once again as his grace pursues an infinite love and it returns to lowly shepherds caring for the sacrificial sheep on a Judean hillside. In Luke 2:9, we read, "And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.'" Oh dear friends, what an amazing illustration of grace that continues to pursue sinful people. The good news that our Savior has been born. And to think that it was first announced to the lowliest of the culture, a picture of you and me. He has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord.

So the long-awaited Savior prophesied and prefigured in the Old Testament came to exalt the lowly. The one who was pictured in millions of animal sacrifices that could never forgive sin finally has come. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us and John says we beheld what? We beheld his glory. Jesus has come, the light of the world, to deliver men from the darkness to light. This brings us to our text this morning here in John 8. Let me give you the context. There is a seven-day festival that closes kind of on the eighth day, the Feast of Tabernacles, and that feast commemorated God's provision and protection of his covenant people during their wilderness wanderings after he had delivered them from the bondage of Egypt. But it was a feast that also pointed to future blessings in the millennial kingdom when the Messiah will come and dwell with all who belong to him. Now in verse 20 of this text, we see that the scene takes place in the temple treasury. Now this is a place that was located in the outermost court of the temple. It was also known as the Court of Women and this was the place where people would bring their offerings and place in one of 13 shofar chests. These were chests that were shaped like massive trumpets and on each one was an inscription of where that particular money would go. That was their ancient way of designated giving, frankly. And during this festival, four massive candelabras, golden candelabra lamps were erected in this outer court and the people would come in exuberant processions with burning torches. They would sing and they would dance and they would celebrate to the accompaniment of a massive Levitical orchestra. This was a grand and glorious spectacle. Some records indicate that this happened every night. We are also told that the massive glow of these lamps were said to illuminate all of Jerusalem. The blazing lamps, of course, symbolized the presence of God in the wilderness wanderings when he appeared in the cloud by day and the fire by night. A cloud that not only led the people to the Promise Land, but also protected them by going between them and the camp of the Egyptians. You will recall that the angel of the Lord and the pillar of cloud and fire moved from being the advance guard to being the rearguard, from leading to protecting. What a picture of our glorious Savior.

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During this celebration, the Israelites would sing Psalm 27:1, "The LORD is my light and my salvation." They would celebrate the word of God being a lamp unto their feet and a light unto their path as the Psalmist tells us, a light to guide those who fear him. They would sing from Psalm 44 that extols the power of Yahweh's right-hand and his arm and the light of his presence. Then suddenly, perhaps at the very end of the celebration when these massive lamps were ceremonially extinguished, in the context of this pageantry, the very source of light and life makes this stunning, loud declaration, "I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness." I'm sure you could've heard a pin drop.

John's record of this amazing event can best be understood I believe in three categories. We're going to look at his stunning claim, his sin-darkened opponents and finally his solemn warning. Folks, I want you to remember something that is easy to take for granted: we are examining the revealed word of God so listen up. These truths are so sacred, so profound, so filled with blessed hope that frankly each one of us should shudder with reverential awe as we open up this text. So let's join together in focusing our minds and hearts on our precious Lord and Savior.

First let's look at his stunning claim, verse 12, "I am the light of the world." You see, this was a claim of deity. The Jews would have instantly understood this. You see, they understood the things that I have rehearsed with you previously about the light of his Shekinah. They understood Isaiah's prophecy concerning the coming Messiah of Israel, that he would be the anointed one whom God would send as "the light to the nations," Isaiah 42:6. And also the Jews would have known immediately who it was that made this stunning declaration. It would have been Jesus of Nazareth, the talk of the entire world in that day. The one who had earlier at that same feast during the water pouring ceremony, declared himself to be the source of living water. So no one was confused as to who this was.

Now, John has said earlier in chapter 1:5, that "he was the light that shines in the darkness." In verse 9, "he's the true light which coming into the world enlightens every man." He doesn't save every man but he enlightens every man. It means to make visible. This is not speaking of inner illumination but an objective revelation of who he is, of the gospel. The true light of the Incarnate Word of the Lord Jesus Christ has invaded the world. On this basis, man must therefore make a choice to either flee from that light lest his deeds be exposed or run to it to receive his revelation and be saved. Think of this personally, what a miracle: in our lives, those of us who know and love Christ, God revealed this light and we were given spiritual life. The veil of ignorance and unbelief was lifted. Do you remember that day when you finally saw your sin and you cried out to Jesus for undeserved mercy and at that moment, according to the Apostle Paul in Acts 26:18, "our eyes were opened and we turned from darkness to light and from the

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dominion of Satan to God." And he goes on to say, "and you received forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in God."

Though the world is as dark as ever, because of Christ we now walk in the light and we have his life. Our path in life is well lit because of the word of God and because of the fellowship of the saints. So we can all attest to the veracity of his claim that he is indeed the light of the world and when you follow him, you don't walk in darkness. "I am the light of the world," he says. Then notice the dramatic consequence of his claim, "he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the Light of life." Literally, the light that produces life. You see friends, apart from his light, you and I would have no spiritual life as I said earlier. We would remain dead in our sins. We would remain incarcerated in the kingdom of darkness and on our way to outer darkness but by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, we believed and we followed him, therefore, we no longer walk in the darkness but have the light of life. David put it this way in Psalm 36:9, "For with thee is the fountain of life and in thy light we see light." Paul tells us in Colossians 1:13 that because of this life, "we were rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred," not just rescued but "transferred to the kingdom of his beloved Son." Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:5 that we became "sons of light and sons of day and therefore we are no longer to be people of night or darkness."

My friends, I ask you this morning: do you follow Jesus? To follow him means to be decisively committed to him, to yield yourself in absolute allegiance, in total submission? Think about it, his holiness and truth is shown forth with untainted splendor. The question is: do you walk in that light? If you follow Christ, the light of his truth and the light of his love will emanate from you. Is that how others characterize you? Are you cultivating biblical godliness in order to put the glory of Christ on display? Let's just get real practical here. Are you praying to the Triune God to transform your entire person so that every thought and every word and every action reflects the glory of Christ? Is that part of your prayer life? Are you committed to following Christ no matter what the personal cost because of your love for God and your desire to experience his presence deep within your soul? Or do you just show up for church when it's convenient and call it good? How sad to see professing Christians walking in the darkness of the world. It's like they go to great lengths to look like the world, to talk like the world, to walk like the world, to act like the world, a world that is hostile to the one they claim to worship. Following their own lusts; living on the periphery of the church and Christian fellowship; hiding in the shadows to avoid detection; living for themselves; doing as little as they possibly can to serve Christ but just enough to silence their accusing conscience. Oh child of God, the world desperately needs to see true Christians that follow Christ. Some of you used to be faithful in service. I've seen this over the years. Involved in the life of the body, active in fellowship and prayer and worship and now we hardly see you. What is going on? Has the world squeezed you into its mold unwittingly? Why do you walk so far from the

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light? Why do you insist upon loitering in the shadows? Some of you prefer the darkness of television over the light of the word of God.

John tells us in 1 John 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin." Let me put it a little bit differently: does his light guide you in your life? If it does, then you will not be a powder who lives in the murky shadows of self-pity because things just aren't going your way. If you live in the light of Christ, you will not live like some kind of hermit hiding in the dark caves of secrecy to avoid the light of accountability and the light of fellowship. Dear Christian, I exhort you to follow Jesus. If you don't want to do that, it is blasphemy for you to come here and to worship him on a Sunday morning. There are plenty of places that you can go to feel good about your Christianity but don't come here and do that if you're not serious about following Jesus. There is enough cultural Christianity going around today and it is dishonoring Christ and it is destroying people. We don't want to be like that. Put the transformative power of God and the gospel on display by cultivating a communion with God that is so real that it is visible to a dark and a dying world so that people look at you and say, "My, there is something different about that person." Yeah, do you know what it is? That's a follower of Jesus.

So with stunning force, Jesus claims to be the light of the world, a claim he will illustrate, by the way, later on in chapter 9 when he miraculously gives sight to a blind man, a dramatic contrast to those who think they see but in reality they remain blind to the light of Christ. Well, we've seen his stunning claim, secondly notice his sin-darkened opponents in verse 13. "So the Pharisees said to Him, 'You are bearing witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true.'" You see a heated public debate ensues here at this point. Now like all committed legalists, these people were blinded by the sin of unbelief and the Pharisees completely missed the profound truth of what Jesus was claiming. Instead they focused on some legal technicality here. You see, according to Old Testament law, every legal claim had to be corroborated by the testimony of more than one witness but what they refused to admit is that there were numerous witnesses to Jesus' deity, those who could testify to the veracity of his claim: there was John the Baptist; there were the 12 disciples; there was the Samaritan woman; there were thousands who had witnessed his miracles and even been recipients of them. But hardhearted skeptics will never be convinced no matter how compelling the evidence. The things of the Spirit are foolishness to the natural man.

Nevertheless, Jesus quietly and calmly and confidently supports his claim to deity by giving them three pieces of compelling evidence. The first has to do with his divine origin and destiny neither of which they understood. Notice verse 14, "Jesus answered

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and sent to them, 'Even if I bear witness of myself, my witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from all where I am going.' You see, Jesus' opponents know nothing of any of this so really they have no right to even question him.

Then his second defense has to do with their innate inability to judge rightly. Verse 15, "You people judge according to the flesh," in other words, you judge according to human standards, by the criteria of a sin-darkened heart filled with self-righteous pride, a heart that is bereft of the discerning power of the Holy Spirit, a heart that is only capable of judging outward appearances. He says, "I'm not judging anyone," that is, "I do not judge in the same way as you do."

Then his third vindication of his self-witness was based upon the fact that indeed there were two witnesses consistent with the demands of the law: God the Father and God the Son who were in perfect agreement. Notice verse 16, "But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and He who sent me. Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. I am He who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me." As usual, the Pharisees missed the profundity of Jesus' statement here as well as in earlier interchanges where he has clearly explained the uniqueness of his relationship with his Father, especially as he bears witness to the truth. So they misinterpret what he says and in verse 19 they say, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor my Father. If you knew Me, you would know my Father also." You see, they continue to think purely on a human level and frankly this theme of Jesus' paternity will continue to dominate the rest of the chapter. But as Jesus makes clear, their inability to recognize him proved that they did not know the Father, the very one Jesus came to reveal. You see, those who reject the Son prove they know nothing of the Father. Jesus said in Matthew 11:27, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son," and then he says this, "and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." Aren't you thankful that the Son willed to reveal the Father to you and to me? Had he not done so, we would have never been saved. We would remain in the darkness and emptiness of human understanding. By the way, this is an important concept, my friends, we must set aside our fallen, ignorant, incomplete, human knowledge and wisdom and become like a child before God will reveal himself to us. Martin Luther said this, "Here the bottom falls out of all merit, all powers and abilities of reason or the free will men dream of and it all counts for nothing before God. Christ must do and must give everything."

Well, Jesus' sin-darkened opponents had not learned this yet. Verse 20, "These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the Temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come." Obviously implicit in this statement is the fact that they wanted

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to seize him. You see, animus against Jesus was continuing to mount but the hour of his sacrifice had not yet come. All of that is dependent upon the sovereign will of God and so he concludes this section with a solemn warning in verse 21. He said therefore to them, "I go away." This refers to his impending death, resurrection and ascension back to the Father. "I go away, and you shall seek Me." Now you must understand, he's not referring to the fact that somehow they are going to seek Jesus personally because they are going to be all too happy to get rid of him. What he's referring to here is that they will continue to seek their Messiah still unaware that it was he that they crucified. "You shall seek me," and then he says this, "and you shall die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come." You see friends, sinful man can never enter into the presence of a holy God. He must be clothed in a righteousness that is foreign to him, the righteousness of Christ.

While the themes of this historical narrative pertain to the Jews in the first century, I want you to know that they apply to every man and woman even to this very day. You see, sinful man does not know who Jesus is therefore they do not know the Father. This is the theme here. In fact, Jesus is going to say that their father is the devil. This is vividly apparent in our culture and throughout the world. Sinful man does not know where Jesus came from, they don't know where he went, they do not understand the solemn warning that unless they humble themselves and believe in him, place their faith in him as their only hope of salvation, they will die in their sin. In fact, that statement is becoming a hate crime in our nation. It's so obvious, sinful men who reject Jesus like the Jews that encountered him here in this narrative, they fail to understand that we are from below, he is from above. They failed to understand that we are from this world and he is not. They don't understand that where he goes, we cannot come apart from faith in Christ because the holiness of God makes it impossible for any form of corruption to enter into his presence. What fellowship has light with darkness? And it's safe to assume that some of these very opponents later saw the light, the light of the world and followed him. We know that thousands were saved at the time of Pentecost when the church was established but most would as Jesus said, die in their sin.

Some 40 years later, the Romans would respond to a Jewish revolt and they would capture and destroy Jerusalem and slaughter 1.1 million Jews and carry about 100,000 off as slaves. How sad to see even that the vast majority of people in our day die in their sins because of their persistent rejection of Christ. Millions who have passed out of this world end up in outer darkness, the outer darkness of eternal hell because they are unpardoned, they are unfit, they are unprepared to enter into the presence of a holy God. Folks, some of those may be people that you know and love. I'm sure they are. They are for me. Some of them may be our own children. Dear Christian, I hope this gives you a burden for the lost because if it doesn't, there is something dreadfully wrong with your Christianity. Ask yourself: do I have a burden for those who are going to die in their sins unless they believe in Christ?

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Bible Text: John 8:12-21

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I want to close by giving you a little assignment given this text. I want you to do something very practical this week. I want you to go to court. Go to court this week. Naw, you don't have to go down to the courthouse but I want you to get alone with God, stand before his presence and ask him to examine you and then let your conscience either accuse or defend you concerning whether or not you are following Christ. This will require you to make a list of things that Christ expects you to do as a believer and guess what? You're going to find that in this book that some of you haven't opened all week until you came here today. And as you compare your life to God's standard, ask the Holy Spirit to bring conviction in where you are not following him and repent, confess that, repent and change your ways. Now my great fear is that the sins of apathy and indifference that rule the hearts of so many Christians may be ruling some of you so for this reason probably some of you, will ignore this but I pray that you'll get serious about this. This needs to be something that we do on a regular basis because, my friends, there is great joy in serving Jesus and following Jesus. There is blessing. What a magnificent church this would be if we all got serious about following Christ. In his hymn, "Take Up Thy Cross," the 19th century hymnist, Charles Everest, put it this way,

"'Take up thy cross,' the Savior said,
'If thou wouldst My disciple be'
Deny thyself, the world forsake,
And humbly follow after Me."

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