

Man's Way of Life Leads to Death Most Dire

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Preacher: Alex Cowie

- [0 : 00] We're going to look for a wee while now at verse 12 in the passage here. And the words are, There is a way that seems right to a man.
- It seems right to a man. But its end is the way to death. And I want us to think about this in terms of man's way leads to death most dire.
- Because that's what it's about. It wouldn't make sense to say man's way leads to death. Because human beings die, whether they're God's people or not.
- And what is in mind here is the lostness of those who persist in their own way of life. That is clear.
- And the point of it is that the unregenerated person will leave this world as a lost soul.
- [1 : 18] Now, some of you may not know the name of Steve Irvin. Some of you may know. But back in September 2006, he was a naturalist.
- He was famous. He was an Aussie. And he dined with death regularly. And he was famous for fighting and beating crocodiles.
- He wasn't Crocodile Dundee, I can tell you. But he was incredibly strong and skilled. But he flirted with death again and again.
- And then the day came when he was down under the sea with his cameraman.
- And they were looking at stingrays, these great big stingrays. And Steve Irvin was above the stingray.
- [2 : 28] And it startled him. And all of a sudden, the spike, the poisonous bayonet like barb came up. And hit him right in the chest.
- Now, some of you who know better about it than I do will know that if you leave it there, you'll live till you get a chance to be treated. But he pulled it out. And he died pretty quickly.
- And the point in this, of course, is the way that seems right to a man leads to death.
- This happens again and again. Some of you, maybe the ladies do too, of course. The ladies are into rugby now too. But over the years, when I've watched rugby, don't want to tell you for how long, but I can go back to when the men who played rugby were of modest build, shall we say.
- Now, the men who play rugby are massive. They're muscled galore. And if you've seen them run at each other in tackles, they're just like battering rams at each other.
- [3 : 47] But the truth of the matter is, the human body wasn't made for that in the human brain either. Even if it is supported by cerebral fluid, it's not made for the battering it gets.
- You're bound to have seen it even on a clip on the television. Man's way is right in his own eyes. But it can be very costly.
- And the point here, going back to Steve Irwin for a few moments, he was world famous. Millions watched him.

Millions knew about him. And when he died, the staff, the journalists in the Sydney Telegraph wrote.

They combined what they were going to write. And this is what they said. We thought he was superhuman. That's what they said.

[4 : 55] We thought he was superhuman. We thought he was indestructible. We were wrong.

My way of remembering that is www. www. We were wrong. There is a way that seems right to a man.

But the end thereof is death most dire. So I want that by way of introduction. I want us to think about three points.

I want us to think about the way of the reckless. And I want us to think about the way of the religious. And lastly, the way that is right.

First of all then, the way of the reckless. Well, we've anticipated this a little bit. But there are those who, as we've said, they dice with death.

[5 : 59] You may have seen it on television. Some people die from a huge, hugely high cliff right into the sea. And there's no guarantee that the mists are ox to just do it for the fun of it, for the buzz of it.

there are those who, as we've said, who, as we've said, dice with death. And they could end up like Steve Irwin.

They dice with it once too often. but perhaps nearer home and more relevant to us that are those who are caught up in a lifestyle that is going to lead to a death sooner rather than later.

I listened to a professor who was involved in the treatment of people with liver disease.

disease. And he had an alarming report. He said that in a few years young people, if they get to their twenties or thirties, their livers will be wrecked and they will die without question.

[7 : 27] There was no talk of transplants. The whole thing was put very powerfully. There are people, and we see it all the time on television, we see it at Christmas and New Year, people carried in the ambulance or in some other way by friends and they're gone with alcohol.

They're totally gone. A way that seems right to a person. They do themselves damage and they don't heed.

And of course we all know the crisis. Scotland has the worst record in the United Kingdom for drug addiction and death by drugs.

And no matter how you polish it up, whether you call it recreational drugs or something else that has an air of respectability, the bottom line is that addictions so very often lead to death, most dire.

It's popular, it's increasingly popular. But our business is just not about acknowledging that these things happen.

[8 : 53] Our business as Christians is what do we do? how do we engage people? How do we get them off Broadway?

That's our business. business. And the more the Saviour means to us, the more we feel or should feel we need to have an answer to these problems.

We need to be able to reach people. Now, arguably, they're not the best of people to reach because they're the most difficult to reach. But it's important that we think about how we engage people.

There's a wee hymn that came through my mind there. Rescue the perishing, plead with the dying, snatch them with pity from sin and the grave, lift up the fallen, tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save.

And, you know, sometimes people just need it from the shoulder. You can go round it and round it and not get to the point.

[10 : 17] And if you're like me, you know it from painful experience, you allow them to take you off on a tangent. And it's important as we think about the way of the reckless to be direct with the reckless.

us. And it may well be in God's goodness they'll thank us for it. Christ has the grace to deliver them and our business is to take the grace he gives us to do our best for them.

The second thing we want to look at is the way of the religious. I think as John Blanchard in his ultimate questions are a very interesting chapter on the way of the religious.

And contrary to what Richard Dawkins would argue, the man is insatiably religious. He has that instinct to worship.

And whether he worships the trees or other objects or he worships the stars or the moon or the sun even, he is insatiably religious.

[11 : 38] It's, as I would say, he's wired that way. And you remember in Acts 17 when Paul went to Athens, everywhere he looked there were altars to various gods.

You find it in Acts 17 there from Acts 22. He was staggered at what he saw. And he ended up, he lost count of the idols he was looking at.

And then last of all, what did he see? An altar to the unknown god. Talk about hedging your bets, eh? Oh, we better have him in too.

And that's what he saw. And of course, that's exactly what Paul locked on to, wasn't it? To the unknown god. Ha, ha. Him you worship ignorantly, I'm going to tell you about.

I'm going to declare it. And that's what he did. And if we believe the Bible's teaching on false religion, then we have to help people see where they are going wrong, where they are worshipping in a way that is false.

[13 : 02] Idols or demons or whatever, we are bound to help them out of where they are. But you know, coming a little bit closer to home, even an ancient religion like Judaism, it's in the same storyline.

It's all about what man can do to please God. They've modified what God wanted and they think they can be accepted.

wanted to remember years ago, it was coming up to Yom Kippur. I shan't mention the rabbi's name, but he's still to the fore in the Jewish community in Glasgow.

and I had been reading the chapter on Yom Kippur and their prayer book, what you call the Orthodox prayer book, and I came across something I'd never noticed before, and that was the emphasis at Yom Kippur that God would hasten in his time the rebuilding of the temple.

Now, you may say, well, what's that to do with this? It has everything to do, because they think they have achieved a way of acceptance with God by their religious duties, by their good efforts.

[14 : 43] And I remember phoning the particular rabbi, I knew him fairly well, and I told him why I was phoning, and he didn't say, it's Yom Kippur, leave it another time, we engaged on it.

And I said to him what I've just said to you, and he said, ah, right, yes. Well, he said, we know we need atonement.

And I said, what have the Jewish people been doing all these centuries since the temple was demolished, AD 70 by Emperor Titus' soldiers?

What have they been doing? Oh, well, and then he went on to say about the mitzvot, commandment, keeping, and so on. But I said, why then do you want the temple?

And he, you've got me there, he said. We'll come back to it sometime, which we never did. But you see, it's a way that seemed right to a man.

[15 : 48] Even people who are highly intelligent, it seemed right to them. But they didn't see there was a problem with the logic of it. And of course, I slipped in that Jesus is the atonement.

And that's the answer to the temple being destroyed. And of course, there's lots of things I added in that are true about the impact of the temple being destroyed.

Judaism had defined another way. But the way that was there staring him in the face, staring the leaders, they didn't want, they didn't listen to.

there's a way that seems right to a man. The end thereof is death, most die.

They didn't want what God provided. The storyline is true of all religions.

[17 : 01] It's about, and you've heard the minister say this before too, it's about man making the connection. Man ascending to God.

That's not the gospel way. The gospel way is he came down. That's what the incarnation is all about.

God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son, that whosoever believes should not perish, but have everlasting life.

And far from it being unclear, it is clear, but people like their own way. They'll go their own way.

It's even common nowadays at certain funerals things to include to include what I would call sanatraism, the song I did it my way.

[18 : 13] Not that I've been involved in, but I've been well assured it happens. And that's the heart of the problem. People want to do it their own way.

way. And we have to help people to examine where they're at and help them to see what the gospel way is about.

And that's what we're going to look at finally the right way. There is a way that is right.

Now, if you're looking at the text, you're saying, well, minister, actually, there's no mention of the right way. But the logic of the text constrains us to see that we're asked to think about the right way.

Well, if all that, if the way that seems right to man is leading to death most dire, then what is the answer to it? What is the alternative?

[19 : 21] The alternative is the right way, and the right way is God's way. And he has been saying it through his prophets down through the centuries.

He's been saying it to encourage them to look to his provision. It's interesting if you've got your Bible there and you look at two chapters on, Proverbs 16 and verse 4, the Lord has made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of doom.

And then it says, two verses on, verse 6, in love and faithfulness, sin is atoned for.

That was God's message to people wanting to do it their own way. So the right way, I say again, is emphatically God's way, the gospel way.

The gospel, even in Abraham's day, the gospel was preached. Yes, of course, it was in promise, and the hope of those who are the Lord's, believe the promises.

[20 : 43] You know, we shouldn't forget that those Old Testament saints were born again. It's just that we're not, the doctrine of the new birth wasn't elaborated on.

But Jesus said it himself to an upend Rabbi, Rabbi Nicodemus, the teacher in Israel.

He said, except a man is born again, he cannot experience the kingdom of heaven. And all those folk down through the ages who were hoping in the promises, including some Gentiles who were brought in, were born again.

Just because the doctrine of the new birth wasn't unpacked, doesn't mean it wasn't dead. It was still God's way.

And I don't know if you've ever known it, but I knew people, in fact a family member, whose hope for heaven was in the person referred to in Isaiah 53.

[22 : 01] Surely he has borne our griefs, and he has carried our sorrows. Yet we did esteem him stricken, like a leper, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. And certainly in one of the cases that's in my mind's eye just now, that person was helped to see the place of the fellowship of the church, like we're in here tonight.

And that person blossomed when she began to attend church regularly. Don't forget, our Saviour put it straight down the line to the religious leaders, to people wanting their own way, and sadly even religious leaders want their own way.

I am the way, said Jesus, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

I sometimes see, this is not a criticism, it's an observation, by the way, but I sometimes see a church is on the side of the wall of a banner, and they've got John 14, verse 6.

[23 : 28] Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. Actually, he's far more than that. No one comes to the Father except through him.

As an incomplete, as it stands, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. You've got the other bit, too. It's emphatic. I sometimes think people are a wee bit afraid of using it, but it's imperative to use it, because he is the way to the Father.

And we're talking here both to the reckless and the religious. righteous. God's way is the way, and it's important to take it on board and learn from it.

Christ is the way to the Father. And the thrust of what is left unsaid but easily pondered is here in the text.

There is a way that seems right to a man, be reckless or religious, but more importantly, there is a way that is right, and it's God's way.

[24 : 51] Not the Sinatra sin. I did it my way. God's way. When Paul went to the Thessalonians, he testified to the power of the gospel in their presence.

He rejoiced that his word came to them, not in word only, though it did, but in power and in the Holy Spirit and with much assurance. confidence. And he was bold to say they turned to God from idols.

There were idol worshippers in Thessalonica, but the word came to them by the Holy Spirit. it. And this is what is needed when we witness to people, is a conviction that when we speak, stumbling we may be, limited in our understanding, but don't let that stop you.

Tell your own testimony. Many of the great preachers, you know, they told their testimony to people and people were converted.

And you've got a story to tell. If you're Christ tonight, you have a story to tell. And you trust the Lord to use it and to bless it.

[26 : 25] That's our business, to tell them of the right way. Because our Savior himself said things that are dire.

Most dire. You only need to read the passage like in Matthew 13 there, the wheat and the tares, what would happen at the end of the age.

And without getting into what did he mean by the fiery furnace, it's obviously symbolical of you don't want to be there.

It's tormenting. I remember, some of you would remember very affectionately Douglas Macmillan who was in St.

Vincent Street. And I remember him saying we were chewing the fat, the spiritual fat, on the subject. And he said, the most painful thing for someone who is in a lost state forever is conscience.

[27 : 48] And I thought that was an insightful observation. Conscience even to ourselves here is the great accuser, isn't it? I shouldn't have done that, I shouldn't have said that.

Conscience accuses our excuses, but there, in death most dire, there's no excusing.

Our Savior himself to go back to the religious and we'll finish there. I wouldn't be able to say what he said to the scribes and the Pharisees Matthew 23 I'm thinking about here.

Woe unto you Pharisees, hypocrites, how shall you escape the damnation of hell?

The more we think about these things, may God constrain us in the grace he's given us to seek to reach others and not to be putting it off, oh, I know I should have, but to do it, to take the opportunities as the Lord gives them to us.

[29 : 15] Amen.