

# Suicide—Not a Safe Solution

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Suicide is something that has permeated many families, including my own. When we know people who do this, or when famous people commit suicide, it brings this subject to the forefront of our minds and can cause a lot of questions. What would cause a person to do this? Will those who commit suicide go to Heaven? Let's notice a few things about suicide from a Biblical perspective.

## SEPARATE SITUATIONS

Every situation is different. When asking if someone who committed suicide will be in Heaven, we might first ask if he was a faithful Christian before his suicide. If not, then the issue of suicide in his case is irrelevant. If he was an accountable person who was not a Christian, the Bible says he will not be in Heaven, no matter how he died (John 8:24; 14:6; Acts 4:12). Those who do not obey the Gospel exactly the way God said and live faithfully afterwards will be punished forever (Matt. 7:21-23; 25:41, 46; Acts 2:38-41; 19:1-5; 22:16; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Heb. 10:23-31; Rev. 2:10, etc.). The exceptions would be someone too young to be held accountable or someone with a mental disability beyond his control causing his brain not to function correctly (Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:16). So the question of whether or not an accountable alien sinner goes to Heaven if he commits suicide is a moot point, but the question of a true child of God doing such and going to Heaven is worthy of further study and discussion.

## THE SIN OF SUICIDE

People are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26), and life is a precious gift from God which must not be taken for granted. Man does not have authority to murder anyone—whether it be murdering someone else, or murdering himself. After Judas' suicide, this was said: *“And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place”* (Acts 1:24-25). Judas fell and went to his own place, which seems to indicate that he went somewhere different than where the rest of the apostles were going (torment vs. paradise – Luke 16:19-ff; 23:43). Notice also what Jesus said: *“The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born”* (Matt. 26:24). Why would it have been better for Judas to have never been born? This statement seems to indicate a punishment of eternal hell for Judas. Judas was not like Peter, who denied Christ and later repented and grew stronger from his mistakes (Luke 22:32; Acts 4:18-20; 5:29; 1 Peter 5:1-ff). We have all made mistakes and committed sins, but how will we react to sin and suffering? The example of Peter is the one to imitate—not Judas.

The Bible teaches that sins must be repented of (during this lifetime) to be forgiven (Heb. 9:27). We will be judged by the things done in our physical bodies: *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (2 Cor. 5:10). If suicide is a sin (I maintain that it is against God's will, and is therefore sin), I do not know how a person would repent of suicide and get forgiveness, because he would already be in the realm of departed spirits (Luke 16:19ff; Acts

8:22-24; Heb. 9:27; 1 John 1:9). The rich man in torment in Hades did not have a chance to repent and cross over to the place of comfort (Luke 16:19-ff). What he had done in his physical body had “sealed his fate,” so to speak.

### **SUFFERING IS STANDARD**

Christians must learn to endure suffering like Job, who refused to “*curse God and die*,” although he was suffering terribly (Job 2:9). James said suffering Christians should look to the examples of suffering prophets and Job:

*Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy” (James 5:10-11).*

Even as a saved child of God, life can be very difficult. It’s true that even the apostle Paul eagerly anticipated leaving this life (although not through suicide). Though Paul knew something much better was in the future, he understood that he needed to remain here to do God’s will as long as he could. He also knew that if he died, he wanted it to be in a way that magnified God:

*According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you (Philippians 1:20-24).*

Although life was difficult for Paul, he knew suicide was not God’s will for his life. Suicide would display despair—not hope, and suicide would not magnify Christ at all.

Suicide would also not be following Christ’s example. Christ did not commit suicide to take the easy way out and get out of his responsibility to His Father. He prayed in emotional agony to God in the Garden (Luke 22:44) and went on to endure the shameful torture of the cross (Matt. 27). Christ taught that God’s children should pray in times of distress, and not give up (Luke 18:1). Paul followed Jesus’ example of perseverance in the face of difficulties. Paul was stoned to the point of death, beaten many times, suffered shipwrecks, thrown into prisons, and probably suffered more than anyone we know today, but suicide was not an option for him (2 Cor. 11:22-28).

What about other Christians of the early church? In all the admonitions for Christians to be faithful in the New Testament in the midst of cruel persecutions, why did God never suggest suicide as a quicker, easier way out? In the days of the early church, Christians were not simply being mocked—they were being thrown into Roman arenas to be killed and eaten by lions. They were being killed left and right in other terrible ways, and even most of the apostles were killed for their faithfulness. Christians were told by Jesus that they would be tortured and imprisoned, but He said they must be faithful until they died to get a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). They were not told to go ahead and commit suicide to get to Paradise quicker! Why was suicide never suggested? It is obviously not God’s will. When something is against God’s will, there is a term

for that—it is called sin (1 John 3:4). Suicide was not an option for faithful Christians of the early church who were suffering greatly, and is still not an option today for those who want to go to Heaven.

All Christians will suffer (2 Tim. 3:12), and we must be willing to suffer through hardships of life to go to Heaven:

*Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. It is a faithful saying: For if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:9-12).*

Paul and Barnabas went back to churches they had planted to encourage those Christians to remain faithful through hardships in life if they wanted to go to Heaven: “*Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Paul wrote, “*And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:17).**

Paul taught Christians to endure and faint not: “*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not*” (Gal. 6:9). The same context teaches that men will reap what they sow: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). What will a person who sows suicide hope to reap from it? (See also 2 Thess. 1:4-5; 1 Pet. 4:13-16; Rev. 1:9). One who commits suicide is apparently not willing to endure suffering; he is taking what he thinks is the easy way out.

## **SERVICE IS STANDARD**

Life is about fearing God and keeping His commandments (Ecc. 12:13). Think of all the commands that will not be obeyed if a person commits suicide, such as:

- Being a good steward of the time God gave us in this life (1 Cor. 4:1-2; Eph. 5:16).
- Studying God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15)
- Doing good deeds for others (Gal. 6:9-10).
- Teaching others the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2).
- Worshiping God faithfully and regularly (John 4:23-24; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Heb. 10:23-31).
- Encouraging other Christians to be faithful so they will go to Heaven (Heb. 3:13-14; 10:23-25; 1 Thess. 5:11).
- Letting one’s light shine before men (Matt. 5:16).
- Glorifying God in our actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
- Setting an example that others can safely follow (1 Cor. 11:1; Heb. 13:7).

Paul instructed other Christians to follow his example, even as He followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). With that in mind, what if Paul had committed suicide after telling others to follow his example? What if all Christians committed suicide after conversion? Who would carry out the Great commission and all the other good works for God’s will to be done on earth? Suicide is obviously not God’s will for us!

Suicide also does not glorify God. It does not show a desire to serve God. Suicide is one of the most selfish acts a person could ever commit. Although the person under consideration is likely suffering a lot of pain, ultimately it shows that this person is not concerned about using his life to serve/submit to God, and he is apparently not very concerned about the horrible effect this will have on others. It shows a lack of love for God, others, and self. That goes against what Jesus called the greatest commandments in God's Word:

*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:36-40).*

Notice that Jesus said one should love himself. How does killing one's self demonstrate a love for self, neighbors, and God? Yet, these were said to be the greatest commandments of all!

### **SWAYED BY SATAN**

One's view of God's salvation and grace can actually have a bearing on whether or not a person gives in to temptations to commit suicide. Some of today's popular religious teachings can actually encourage suicidal tendencies rather than discouraging them. For example, if someone who believes in Jesus is contemplating suicide, a false doctrine such as "faith only" salvation could actually encourage something like this. If a person is told that as long as He believes in Jesus he is going to Heaven, then according to that doctrine, the sin of suicide would not keep the believer from Heaven (and neither would any other sin). The phrase "faith only" is found in the Bible once, but it is preceded by the words "not by": "*Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (James 2:24; cf. 2:14-26; Acts 10:34-35; 2 Cor. 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:22; Matt. 7:21-23; Heb. 5:9; Rev. 20:12-14, etc.).

There are also perverted views of God's grace that allow people to commit all kinds of sins and give people a false sense of hope who have not repented of those sins. Those who do not repent (change) will face God's wrath in judgment (Acts 17:30-31; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 5:19-21). God's grace teaches us to live in holiness and obedience: "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world*" (Titus 2:11-12).

The false doctrine that one cannot fall from grace could also deceive people into thinking suicide would be acceptable. If one is told that once he is saved he can never fall from God's grace, then according to that teaching he can do whatever he wants (even commit suicide) and never fall from grace. There could not be a more dangerous doctrine for Christians to believe (2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:20-22; Heb. 10:23-31, etc.). If it were impossible for a Christian to fall from grace and be lost, why all the admonitions to be faithful unto death in the New Testament? The majority of the New Testament was written to Christians to encourage them not to lose their reward (2 John 8). For example, the following words were written to Christians, called "*holy brethren*" (Heb. 3:1):

*Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye*

*know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears (Hebrews 12:15-17; cf. 3:1; 1 Cor. 5).*

True faithfulness necessarily involves obedience, although many would accuse me of being a legalist or a teacher of “salvation by works” for teaching such. In any case, I can only speak as the Bible speaks (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11), and the Bible teaches that the Christian who willfully sins after being baptized to wash away his sins must repent of that sin and confess it to God in prayer to be forgiven (Acts 8:12-13, 22-24; 1 John 1:6 – 2:6).

### **SCRIPTURAL SYMPATHY**

Another thing to mention is that we must be careful about how we publicly react to suicides. If we give people the false impression that everybody who commits suicide goes to Heaven, then this may encourage people to kill themselves. Statements can be made such as, “Nobody in his right mind would kill himself,” and someone may argue that anyone who commits suicide is not mentally capable of being held accountable. Although that can be the case with some individuals, I do not believe that is always the case. On the other hand, harshly openly condemning those who commit suicide can hurt a lot of people, so the subject must be handled carefully.

There are many types of situations that the Bible may condemn, but the situation must be handled tactfully. What if an impenitent homosexual dies of AIDS, and his mother asks if her son will be in Heaven? We know what the Bible says: *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire”* (Jude 7). What if an impenitent fornicator dies in sin, and his mother wants to know if he will be in Heaven? (cf. 1 Cor. 5:1-5; Gal. 5:19-21). The Christian cannot compromise what God has said, but he must speak the truth in love and use wisdom in his approach to answering such questions (Eph. 4:15; Col. 4:5-6).

### **CONCLUSION**

Because of what the Bible teaches, I believe suicide is against God’s will (and is therefore sinful—1 John 3:4). However, Jesus will be the ultimate Judge in every case. If someone had something seriously wrong with his brain, so that he could not think and reason properly, I believe Jesus will take that into consideration in judgment. With that said, I am not talking about the sane person who chose to intoxicate himself and willfully cause his brain to function incorrectly. Suicide often occurs after one chooses to impair his brain through alcohol or other drugs. Becoming mentally impaired for recreational purposes is sinful, and those who choose to do this open themselves up to all kinds of dangers (suicide and otherwise) by impairing the brain’s ability to function. The Bible clearly says that those who do such things will not go to Heaven (Gal. 5:19-21).

Jesus will judge by His Word those who have the ability to reason and understand (John 12:48), and His Word teaches against taking one’s own life. Young people need to be taught from an early age that things like fornication, drunkenness, and suicide are not options for people who want to go to Heaven. Many times that type of teaching and exemplary living does not exist in the home, and sadly, tragedies occur. May we do all we can to serve the Savior, endure suffering, and discourage others from committing sins like suicide.

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