

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ABOUT SUICIDE?

Recently, news has spread that one of the prominent church ministers has committed suicide. This has shaken some, some became emboldened in their animosity towards the church, and some, to be sure, have become very troubled. This brief article is meant to provide clarity to the readers who have questions about the biblical view of suicide.

The first thing that needs to be addressed is that the article never calls anyone to cause pain or suffering to those who knew the deceased. This is not an attempt to put a stain on any denomination, church, or Christianity as a whole. As a pastor, I understand that in similar situations, the people need the Word of God. I am hoping that the truth will be received in love (Eph. 4:15). Now, let's prayerfully consider what the Bible teaches about suicide.

- 1. Very often, attempts to commit suicide have a sinful foundation and is not done spontaneously without any reason.** From the Bible's point of view, suicide is a sin. Sin can be defined as: "any action that is contrary to the will of God." If that is the case, then we need to understand the process of how temptation originates through temptations, desires (of the flesh), planning, and committing of the sin itself.

"Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. " (James 1:13-15)

As we can see, this involves a process! If we were going to be honest with ourselves, we need to recognize that the reason why we commit sin is because we have lost a series of temptations, thoughts, gazes, thoughts, etc.

This principle is clearly demonstrated by two stories of suicide: Saul and Judas. Saul ended his life by falling on the sword:

"Then Saul said to his armor bearer, "Draw your sword and pierce me through with it, otherwise these uncircumcised will come and pierce me

*through and make sport of me. But his armor bearer would not, for he was greatly afraid. So Saul took his sword **and** fell on it. “ (3 Kings. 31:4)*

As we study the whole biography of the life of Saul, although with sadness, but we still ought to recognize that Saul has been walking down this path for years. This decision was not a surprise and was not spontaneous. The same thing could be said of Judas who, after the betrayal of Christ felt remorse, but never repented, and ended his life by hanging himself.

“Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See to that yourself!” And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.” (Matt. 27:3-5)

It is truly sad, but again, for a serious student of Scriptures, it is not a surprise. Judas was known to the Lord as a traitor who was under the influence of Satan:

“Jesus answered them, “Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?” Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him” (John 6:70-71)

«During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him “ (John. 13:2)

«While I was with them, I was keeping them in Your name which You have given Me; and I guarded them and not one of them perished but the son of perdition, so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. “ (John. 17:12)

Perhaps someone will try to justify the actions of Judas as if he did not want to do it, but Satan or God compelled him to do it. There is a text that clearly emphasizes Judas as taking responsibility for his willful decisions:

”Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it.” (John. 12:6)

He was a thief and has been a thief for a long time. When we analyze these facts in light of Judas suicide, we have to at least admit that there was a long process of downward spiral and compromise.

All of this allows us to conclude that very often, the person who commits suicide is walking down this path for more than a year. If that is the case, then it is reasonable to conclude that these people do not have real relationship with God, although they can be engaged in spiritual things, be surrounded by very good people, but at the same time, they could be slaves of sin.

2. Sometimes, there are intense spiritual struggles prior to suicide.

If you noticed, in the first point, I used the word “often”, but now – “sometimes”. That is because we see this in Scriptures. In reality, we do not find specific examples of spiritually mature and strong people who are committing suicide. However, there are a few examples where the man of God is at the verge of suicide. For example, Prophet Elijah was a man of God who proclaimed the Truth and ministered to return the people of God, the Israelites, to worship the True God. His faith was so strong and convincing that after fire came down from God upon the altar of Elijah, the people fell down on the ground and said:

“The Lord is God, the Lord is God” (1 Kings. 18:39)

After Jezebel finds out about this victory, she promises to murder Elijah on the next day. Elijah flees to the desert and asks for death:

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, “It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.” (1 Kings. 19:4)

Of course, God did not grant this request to Elijah, and quite the contrary, He revealed Himself to Elijah and encouraged him about the continuation of the priestly ministry. We can characterize this dark period in the life of Elijah by a modern term: “depression”. However, let’s dive deeper if there may have been a compromise in the life of Elijah. There hasn’t been! Looking at his

ministry, we see the difficulties that he is faced with, but we cannot identify the progression of sin in his life.

Here are a few more example of spiritually mature but overwhelmed people. Moses once prayed in the following way:

"Я I alone am not able to carry all this people, because it is too burdensome for me. "So if You are going to deal thus with me, please kill me at once, if I have found favor in Your sight, and do not let me see my wretchedness." (Numbers. 11:14-15)

Moses was also in in a very difficult position, and also thought about death as the solution of his problems. Similarly, Jonah was disappointed and embittered:

"When the sun came up God appointed a scorching east wind, and the sun beat down on Jonah's head so that he became faint and begged with all his soul to die, saying, "Death is better to me than life." (Jonah 4:8)

Considering similar facts and the seriousness of the situation, we ought to be precise in our conclusions and how we view suicide. Maybe that's why there only a few who are talking about or writing about these issues. Why is that? It is probably because this problem could be used by people in order to justify their own sin, or to condemn others.

- 3. From a Theological point of view, how does the Bible portray suicide? It is a sin that is specifically forbidden by God: "Thou shall not kill." (Ex. 20:13)** This is what a person does not by faith: "**whatever is not of faith is a sin**". (Rom. 14:23) If that is the case, then similar actions are clearly condemned by Scriptures.

The Bible teaches that suicide is another form of a selfish life of comfort, self-glorification, satisfaction of personal wants, and a pursuit of happiness. You will say that suicide is painful and unpleasant. But a person decides to take such a step in order to avoid another pain or inconvenience that becomes stronger than the fear of death. It is pursuit of happiness that is expressed in an attempt to ease the burden of life. The Gospel, however provides a

substantially different source of happiness—God Himself, His forgiveness, His acceptance, and His promises.

Suicide is a clear pursuit of happiness, although perhaps not through the most understood means, but that is what it comes down to. To these people, suicide appears as relief from the problems, pain, and suffering, and therefore, it is an apparent promise of happiness. Sadly, this is a false source of hope. At that moment, the person may not even be thinking clearly:

“For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. “ (Rom. 7:15)

Where is the antidote from such a faulty thinking, and is there one? It is interesting that when Christ addressed some topics and revealed the deep truths, He did so through very simple and understandable illustrations.

“And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? “ (Luke. 9:23-25)

A given text speaks of two important concepts that are important in our consideration:

- 1) Human soul is so precious and important, that even if the person gains the whole world and forfeits his soul, it would be considered foolish. Christ speaks about the importance and the value of human life. Many people who are considering suicide (and perhaps out of some who are reading this article), they do not appreciate the value of their soul!
- 2) Christ is that price that we ought to prize to such an extent that we should be ready to get a hold of at any cost. **“He who loses his life for My sake...”** (Luke 9:24). In other words, if Christ is not going to become this treasure that is hidden in the field for which the person would sell everything **“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man**

found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.” (Matt. 13:44), then Gospel will not be able to stop a person from suicide. This truly Christian understanding gives life, and purpose, and confidence.

“For not one of us lives for himself, and not one dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living.” (Rom 14:7-9)

We can have confidence and forgiveness of sins only when we have a saving relationship through Jesus Christ:

“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts. 4:12)

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. “ (Rom. 8:18)

This text reminds us about the glory of Christ, and about that glory that every believer will experience. How great it would be if similar texts would stop those who were thinking about suicide and help them to overcome their circumstances. It is the glory of Christ right now and our hope in the future glory with Him is the key to understanding and overcoming the thoughts of suicide.

Lastly, as we emphasize the seriousness of the thoughts on suicide, may the given text awaken people with similar thoughts!

“Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. “ (1 John. 3:15)

This text teaches that if the person is living in a constant hatred (desire to kill), which in the Greek original describes an ongoing action, then that person does not have eternal life! It is important to note that this text does not mean that if you ever have thoughts of hatred towards your neighbor, that you are not a child of God. However, if the person has similar thoughts for a long time, then this is a

signal that it is possible, that such person may not be a believer. Cling to God, and never seek a reason for justification of such a horrific decision!

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*NASB1995 was used for the Bible quotes