

Can a Christian Commit Suicide?

by Tim Conway

While suicide is a sin, it is a pardonable sin if the person is truly a Christian, but it raises questions about the genuineness of their faith.

Duration: 32:19

Scripture: Psalm 34:17-18, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 27:5, Mark 3:28, 1 Corinthians 6:9, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 12:1-2, James 4:2, 1 John 2:3, Revelation 21:4

Topics: "Suicide And Faith", "Suffering And Grace"

Description

This sermon addresses the question of whether a Christian can commit suicide, highlighting that suicide is self-murder driven by unfulfilled desires. It explores biblical examples of suicide and the implications of such actions on one's faith and salvation. The speaker emphasizes the need to trust in God's grace and endure suffering, rather than resorting to self-will and unrighteousness. Suicide is portrayed as a dishonorable and sinful act, contrasting with the call to find rest and satisfaction in Christ.

Transcript

Well, the question I've been asked is, can a Christian commit suicide? And if we really think about what suicide is, what is suicide? Taking your life, killing yourself. It's murder, right? It's self-murder. And if we consider suicide just from the standpoint that it's murder, you start thinking, what does the Bible say about murder? Why do people murder? What does James tell us? James says this very specifically.

In James chapter 4, verse 2, You desire, and you do not have, so you murder. Right? That's what it says. Well, think about how this applies to self-murder as well.

I used to work with an unbeliever, when I was an engineer, who told me that he believed that suicide was an expression, it was like the fullest expression or the ultimate expression of self-hate. And I said, I don't think so. I think it's an expression of self-love.

He said, how do you figure? They're destroying themselves. Well, it comes right from this text. Why do people commit suicide? You desire, and you do not have, so you murder.

People murder, including self-murder, because they have desires that they're unable to fulfill. That's why people commit suicide. They want something.

You know, in this country, back when we entered into the Great Depression, the stock market crashed, and many of the businessmen committed suicide. Why? Because they wanted their money back, and they couldn't get it. They desired, and they didn't have, so they killed themselves.

Sometimes, a young person will commit suicide to strike back at a parent, to hurt somebody. What is it they desire? They desire to inflict hurt, but in life, they don't feel like they can achieve that. Or, it's probably common, self-murder is inflicted because people desire to be delivered from what they're suffering.

They're suffering pain. They're suffering loneliness. A young man will lose his girlfriend, and contemplate suicide, or actually try to go through with it.

Maybe even accomplish it. Why? Because he desires, and he can't have, and he thinks, there's a thinking that, well, if I kill myself, then I just stop existing, and the pain goes away. The hurt goes away.

They desire to be free of the pain, free of the hurt, free of the suffering, and isn't that so? James chapter 4 perfectly describes murder, but it also describes self-murder. It's really the same principle. Suicide is basically an expression of an individual, who wants what they want, and will murder to get what they want, even when it's not what God wants.

That's really what suicide is. It's having a desire for something that God isn't pleased to give you right now, and you're going to try to take it into your own hands to get it, even when that's not the way God wants you to get it. God would have you wait on Him.

God would have you to take your suffering to Him. God would have you to look to Christ to help you, and fill that emptiness. You see what happens, people commit suicide, not because they desire Christ, but because they desire something else, when God would have us desire Christ, and treasure Christ, and find our satisfaction in Christ.

That's why the Christian, when they are suffering even the greatest things in this life, can bear up under it, without taking his own life, because Christ is always greater than anything else that he might desire. So, let's consider this further. If we just simply did this, if we say, can a Christian commit suicide? Well, if we were just to go to the Bible, and look at... I came up with seven suicides in the Bible.

I don't think there's any more. As well as I could think, and I googled it as well, so I think there are seven. Think about the men who have committed suicide.

I don't think there's any women, it's all men. Abimelech. You guys remember who Abimelech was? This is what's said of Abimelech.

He's the one who hired worthless and reckless fellows, who followed him, and he went to his father's house at Ophrah, and killed his brothers, the sons of Jeroboam, seventy men on one stone. He killed his seventy brothers. Tremendously wicked man.

Anyway, Abimelech, he committed suicide. He was trying to take a city, standing at a tower, a certain woman threw an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, and crushed his skull. Then he called quickly to one of the young men, his armor bearer, and said to him, draw your sword and kill me, lest they say of me a woman killed him.

You see what his desire was? He desired life. He desired not to have the reputation that a woman killed him. And so, he resorts to his expression of pride right in his death.

Not a good guy to associate with. In other words, if somebody is claiming to be a Christian, and they're contemplating suicide, they're identifying with a man like Abimelech. Who else? Saul.

Saul is a man who desired to take his own life. Again, he had desires of not being abused by the Philistines. So, he called upon his armor bearer to put an end to his life.

He said, draw your sword and thrust me through with it, lest these uncircumcised come and mistreat me. But his armor bearer would not, for he feared greatly. Therefore, Saul took his own life, or he took his own sword and fell upon it.

We know about Saul. Was Saul a righteous man? Saul was not a righteous man. He had this said of him, because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he also has rejected you from being king.

So, this was a God rejecter. So, Abimelech and Saul, those are the kind of men that we find in Scripture. Saul's armor bearer, when his armor bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell upon his sword and died.

Now, we don't know much about him, other than he's following a bad king. Ahithophel, did you ever hear of that name? Ahithophel was the counselor for David. And when David's son took over and took the throne, Ahithophel stayed there with him.

It says, when Ahithophel saw that his counsel, in 2 Samuel 17, 23, when he saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey and went off home to his own city. He set his house in order and hanged himself, and he died and was buried in the tomb of his father. This is a man who was among the conspirators with Absalom.

He rose up against a righteous king in David, and he was involved in the conspiracy against him and sided with the evil son. So this is a wicked counselor. So you have Ahithophel, you have Saul, you have Abimelech.

How about Zimri? This is also a character that committed suicide, not one you want to identify with. 1 Kings 16, 18, he was a king in Israel. Listen to what it says of him.

When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned the king's house over him with fire and died. So he basically burned himself to death. Because of his sins that he committed, doing evil in the sight of the Lord, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and for his sin which he committed, making Israel to sin.

So this is a man whose sin was very great before God. So you have Abimelech, a murderer, Saul, a God rejecter, Ahithophel, a wicked conspirator, Zimri, a wicked king. How about Judas? Judas was the betrayer of Christ.

He committed suicide. It says he went and hanged himself. Matthew 27, verse 5. What kind of man was he? Jesus himself called him the son of destruction.

Now, that's six. We don't know a lot about the armor bearer. The other one that comes up is Samson.

Now we know Samson was a righteous man, but I think it needs to be also clarified. Samson did not commit suicide per se. In other words, he didn't push those columns out because his agenda was to take his own life.

If he would have pushed those columns away and ended up living, he would have been quite happy. His agenda was to bring vengeance on the enemies of God. In fact, he was praying to the Lord right as he did this.

Lord, give me strength just this once more, because he wanted to take vengeance on them for having put out his eyes. But his primary agenda was not ending his own life. He's not one that we really want to give that strong consideration to.

But these other men, these are the kind of examples that we get in the Bible of men that committed suicide. Clearly, this is not the practice of righteous men. So somebody that would claim to be a Christian and contemplate suicide, they would not be considering an activity, they would not be considering an action that is typically attributed to righteous men, but that which is attributed to wicked men, evil men.

This is the practice of people that hate God, hate God's people. But that being said, let's think for a second here. What kind of sin is suicide? We said it before.

It's murder. It's self-murder. If we just ask this question, have murderers been forgiven? Are there any cases of murderers in the Scriptures that have been forgiven? David? Moses? So, if we were to ask the question, did Jesus die on the cross for the sin of murder, we would have to say yes.

David and Moses would be proof of that. In fact, didn't Jesus say this, Mark chapter 3 verse 28, Truly I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin. Did you hear that? All sins will be forgiven the children of men.

Was suicide covered on the cross? Apparently, if all sins can be forgiven, what we find in the Bible is the unpardonable sin is blaspheming the Holy Spirit. I guess if we could prove that suicide and blaspheming the Holy Spirit were the same thing, we could conclude that it's the unpardonable sin. But it's not that.

It's not self-murder. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is blaspheming the Holy Spirit. Self-murder is a different thing.

And so, if all sins can be forgiven, then we would need to say that it would be included in all sins, and that it could be forgiven the children of men. So it seems that if it's not an unpardonable sin, it's a pardonable sin, right? If we were just going to wrestle with that text there in Mark, or the parallel text in Matthew, we would have to say it is a pardonable sin. If we're just dealing with the fact that all sins can be forgiven.

But in thinking further about whether a Christian can commit suicide, we probably need to go further. Because, obviously, theoretically, it's in the category of a pardonable sin. Theoretically.

In other words, if you have a Christian who's truly a Christian, we know he's justified. We know all of his sins are pardoned. So, if we actually ask the question, can a Christian commit suicide? Well, we would say this.

If a Christian commits suicide, certainly it's forgiven, because he's pardoned. But that's probably not the question that we need to really be asking. The question we need to be asking is, would a Christian commit suicide? Because we could phrase this another way.

We could say, can a Christian rob a bank and shoot and kill the teller the last day of his life? Or we might phrase it this way. If a Christian was so greedy that he robbed a bank, and then happened to shoot and kill a teller the last day of his life, would he be saved? Well, you see, if he's a Christian, certainly he would be, because he's a Christian. But the question we need to ask is, would he do that? Is that really the fruit of the life of a Christian? Certainly we have to ask that question, would he do that? Because the Bible tells us pretty plainly things like this.

1 Corinthians 6, verse 9. Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. We see something like this. 1 John 2, verse 3. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.

Whoever says, I know him, but does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him, whoever says he abides in him, ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

So, in light of texts like these, and many others we could look at, shouldn't there be serious questions that would be raised, if somebody ended their life that way? Any different than if the last day of their life, they robbed a bank and shot the teller? What it tells us, is there is an express manifestation of unrighteousness, at the end of their life. Which certainly would call into question, and raise serious doubts about the genuineness of the faith, of anyone who claimed to be a Christian, and yet committed suicide, or bank robbery, the last day of their life. You know, when somebody commits suicide, it definitely raises a question.

And I know that sometimes for the sake of hurting family, hurting friends, pastors, desiring to try to not offend, and not further hurt the suffering family, may try to encourage the family to believe, that everything ended well, with a person that has committed suicide, who professed to be a Christian, and maybe even seemed to run well, at certain times in his life. But at best, it brings into question, the genuineness of the person's Christianity. It has to.

Because Jesus, and Paul, and the other writers of Scripture, raise again and again and again, questions about the authenticity of people's Christianity, or professions of faith. If there are these blatant expressions of unrighteousness, and ending your life by murder, coming to the end of a professed Christian life, and ending it with murder, is suspect at best. It certainly doesn't leave a good feeling.

Suicide is murder. Suicide is sin. Suicide is an expression of self-will.

Suicide is unrighteousness. Suicide is never lawfully permitted by God. And so, the one who commits suicide, is ending their life, not trusting the Lord.

They're ending their life in sin. They're ending their life in unrighteousness. They're ending their life flagrantly, committing a sin of great proportion.

That's their last endeavor in this lifetime. Jesus said, that if you endure to the end, you will be saved. What does that mean? Endure in faith.

Endure trusting Him. Endure all the way to the end. Is that enduring to the end, when a man ends his life? Did they endure to the end? I don't think we can tell for certain.

And it certainly, it definitely raises doubt. But that being said, I know this, if somebody's watching, and they're contemplating suicide, a person feels alone in the pain they're suffering. They feel like nobody else can identify.

And the truth is, I don't know the depths of which God may call people to suffer. I don't know the depths of spiritual attacks. I don't know the depths of sorrow, of pain, of weakness, that can come on people.

I mean, I've obviously had to experience some things, but I don't know the fullness of the depth of what God calls certain people to suffer. But I do know this. I've read the biography of David Brainerd before.

And when he was on his deathbed, he experienced such terrible pain. He was dying of tuberculosis in the mid-1700s, at a time when they didn't have the painkillers like we have today. He suffered excruciatingly.

His suffering was so traumatic, it was so agonizing, that he said the very thought entering his mind that he would have to endure that pain even for another minute, he said the thought of it was enough to drive him insane. He was under such agony. But you know what his thought was in the midst of all of it? Not, I want to end my life.

His thought was, God help me and hold me up and keep me from dishonoring you. His greatest burden under that kind of agony was that he not disgrace his Lord, that he end life well. Is it possible that a true child of God can experience such pain? Brainerd, he didn't end his life by suicide.

He called upon the Lord to the end asking for grace to endure the suffering that God was permitting him to suffer. And he ended well. But might it be that another Christian under the same pain would not be able to stand up and would opt out? Is it possible that such sorrow, such depression, such despair might come upon somebody and unlike Brainerd, they're not able to hold up? Perhaps.

And because I haven't experienced it all and I haven't been in every situation, perhaps. We don't know. But even if that's possible, again, it just puts a cloud over a person who ends their life that way.

And I have to fear that many people that commit suicide, believing themselves to be Christians, immediately find that they weren't. That ending their life by such an expression of seeking their own desire, not God's, is probably the final exclamation mark a lot of times to a life that was lived in rebellion to God. And whether a person is saved or a person is lost, I know this, nobody wants to end their life that way.

Nobody wants to end their life that way. The person who is lost, he may think he's saved, but he's lost. He certainly does not want to end his life that way.

Because whatever pain he thinks he's escaping, he's stepping into horrors beyond his imagination. Jesus himself said, hell is to be escaped at all costs. If you have to cut off hands, cut off feet, gouge out eyes, in a spiritual sense, you have to make this radical amputation of idols in this life, he said, do it.

Whatever radical moves, however aggressive, however violent it may seem, to sever yourself from your sins, you need to do it in order to escape hell. He said it is so fearful. He described it as a hell of fire, a furnace of fire, a place of weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is a place of eternal punishment. It goes on forever. And whatever suffering is here, the apostle Paul says, is momentary and light.

Whatever is there, whatever a person is trying to escape here, it is ten thousand times worse afterwards. Something Jesus said needs to be escaped, no matter what it costs you. And so to that person, who is wrestling with whether they are even saved or not, and they are contemplating committing suicide, you do not want to commit suicide, and come face to face with God Almighty in your sin, face to face with a God who takes no pleasure in your unrighteousness.

You do not want to end your life in one final act of rebellion, to come face to face with a God you have rebelled against. If you are suffering such pain in your life, that you just do not feel like you can stand up under it, Jesus says, come unto me, and I will give you rest. He calls you to find rest in Him.

He says He gives help. If you call upon Him, He will give you grace to bear up. And if you truly are a Christian, but you are just in such a deep, dark hole, again, even if you are saved, you do not want that to be the last act of your life, an act of rebellion, stepping off into eternity, not finishing well, leaving behind that testimony to your family, your children, your parents, your friends, that the grace of God was not sufficient to bear you up underneath those things.

You do not want to step out of life on that note. Rather, we want to step out the way Brainerd did. Step out under the most excruciating suffering, but rather than choosing to take your own life, fearing, lest even under all that pain, you should do any dishonor to Jesus Christ, to His name, to the name of God, determined to bear up under whatever it is, in order to end life well.

Oh, to the family and friends that saw Him die, they could say, Glory be to God, because He finished well. They saw the grace of God in His life. Jonathan Edwards, who was so impressed by it, he wrote his, I mean that was like an exclamation mark on a life well lived, that inspired him to publish the man's biography.

Whereas, even if a true Christian were to end his life, with suicide, it just puts a cloud over his life for everybody. It brings shame. And so, standing strong to the end, fighting the good fight, trusting the Lord.

Jesus went before us, and He suffered beyond anything we can suffer, and He's sympathetic, and He says that He'll give us help, and we can find help in Him. Going out of this life, resting on His help, that's the way we want to end it. And so, whether we're lost, whether we're saved, we do not want to end our life with suicide.

It is not an honorable end for the Christian. And like I say, I'm very fearful that those who are so determined to take into their own hands the way to end life, and do so in a way that is not pleasing to the Lord. Paul said that we need to try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord, and ending our life in suicide is not pleasing to Him.

So, no Christian should want to end his life in a way that is not pleasing. And no lost person should want to end his life knowing that the moment he ends it, there he is, face to face with a God who is full of wrath towards him. Better call upon the Lord, and find mercy from that God, and grace to press through, and fullness in Christ to fill all the emptiness in the heart.

I mean, so many people, they commit suicide just because they're empty, they're lonely. This life has just failed them. But that's right, that's what the Bible teaches.

But Jesus never fails His people. Jesus is altogether lovely, altogether satisfying, altogether fills us with joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. Joy and satisfaction are to be found in Christ.

Don't, don't kill yourself. Because what you are desiring, you're not going to get. And everything your heart craves is truly to be found in Christ, not in death.

Because death isn't nonexistence. Death isn't annihilation. Death is eternal punishment.

It is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. It is punishment for sins. It is not going to end the pain.

It is only going to begin the real pain. God help you. Amen.

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