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Suicide - a despairing leap into the dark.

Two things have prompted me to mount these notes which are the substance of a sermon I preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on March 16th, 2008.

First of all, there have been those in recent years who were known to me who, in the midst of a depressive darkness, yielded to the taking of their own lives.

I never had and still do not have the slightest grounds for doubting that they were the Lord's children, truly converted and washed in the blood of the Lamb. I joined with others at their funerals and mourned over the despair they had wrestled with and which, in the end, prompted them to take the action they did.

We may and must deem the act as wrong but never lose a sense of compassion for them in the largely unknown struggle in which they were engaged, in some instances, for many, many years.

Nevertheless, it must never be thought that such compassion and such asserting that we believe them to have been truly saved in anyway exonerates suicide as a sin.

My second reason is a very recent email exchange I had with a brother who took me to task for a statement he read in my introduction to this sermon on SermonAudio. The statement he objected to was : "I say for most because suicide does not result in the damnation of the Christian who yields to that temptation." You can read the statement and its context below.

I will reproduce some of the exchange which took place as I sought to justify my statement though I have removed all references to the identity of the brother who wrote me.

The exchange began with this email.

First of all, I admire your stand on many issues and for your boldness to proclaim them, but I found within notes under a sermon you did on sermon audio about suicide, the following statement,

'I say for most because suicide does not result in the damnation of the Christian who yields to that temptation.'

I must totally disagree with you here. Suicide is self murder. There are only instances of suicide in the scriptures of wicked men dying like this. I really think telling a congregation this leaves a license open to do it. If abortion is sin and euthanasia is sin, then so is suicide. There are far too many Pastors saying it is ok to commit suicide and the christian can go to heaven !!!!!!!! I know however that many are getting put on anti-depressants and the church is rampant with believers who rely on these dangerous drugs - rather than on an ALL SUFFICIENT GOD. These drugs have side effects that include more depression and suicide. I urge you to watch the documentary on the subject and rethink your statement.

IN CHRIST.

I replied to this criticism as follows.

I repeat what I said on the occasion you refer to and stand by it.

. , a Christian cannot be damned!

We either have eternal life or we don't! Your thesis makes the likes of and and thousands like them, false professors and deceivers who are now in hell eternally.

Now is self-killing worse than killing another human being?



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If it is, why is it?

If it is not worse than killing another person, what do you say of David's killing of that good man Uriah, 2 Samuel 11?

If killing another is as wicked as suicide then according to what you say David is in hell.

That he is not, Acts 2:25-28, 13:32, 34, 36; Heb 11:32-40.

Christians, and that includes you , constantly commit sins which if they were not under the blood of Christ would damn their souls! You commit sins which will damn unregenerate men and women but NOT YOU because you are under the blood of Christ.

I really think that you need to give due consideration to these things

Sincerely,

IF.

To my response another email was received.

Ivan,

. I have studied this long and hard and see Job suffering, yet trusting GOD and David hanging onto GOD in all his trials but never once did a saint kill himself !!!! Read Foxes Book of Martyrs did any dear saints under the threat of death, kill themselves ?

. This is one of the wickedest things I have come across in the church and certainly is vile in the sight of GOD. I fear for those being taught such a wicked thing and have lost much respect for those who stand by it. All those who committed suicide in scripture were wicked! No, I urge you to recant of this teaching and think about what you are teaching as it is in no way to be found in scripture !

With teaching like this about I really know we are living in the last days.

To this response I sent the following reply.

Dear ,

You utterly fail to reply to the SCRIPTURES I quoted.

I am saddened by the experiences of but that experience is not a basis upon which to formulate doctrine.

Suicide is entirely wrong as is every sin! Rev 21:8 states: "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

Have you never feared, been unbelieving, told lies or been deceitful. I know the answer you should give to this question. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us," 1 John 1:10.

That being so, why are you not damned? Because God for Christ's sake has forgiven you and you can say, "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back," Isaiah 38:17.

Now in saying that, am I encouraging people to commit sin? The Arminian says I am but surely you are not an Arminian?!



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Yes, David and Job are the models we should follow and emulate when in the midst of trial and tribulation but they are models to follow in other spiritual matters as well. They are examples of prayerfulness and devotion to God.

Tell me, , have you lived up to their standard and faithfully followed Job and David's ways in all things? Again, I think I know the answer you must give if you are honest.

That being the case, why are your failures not to be condemned just as severely as the poor Christian who does not follow the example of Job and David "of trusting GOD and . . . hanging onto GOD in all his trials" (to quote your own words), and foolishly and wrongly seeks an escape by suicide?

You seem to have it fixed in your mind that I do not condemn suicide as a sin which is a total misrepresentation of my position and is a sin on your part. Sadly, , knowing you of old, once such a thought is lodged in your mind, it is unlikely that you will repel it!

. , I don't really want to read the article you sent me, especially if it is the source of the error you have imbibed. The Word of God is my authority and guide ALONE.

Therefore I urge you to consider the Scriptures that I have set before you rather than some pdf that man has composed.

Sincerely,

IF.

While this did not end the exchange of emails, I think that the excerpts we have given help explain why we post these notes and trust that they will prove helpful and above all God-honouring.

"SUICIDE . . a despairing leap into the dark"

" . . . why shouldest thou destroy thyself? . . . why shouldest thou die before thy time?" Ecclesiastes 7:16-17.

(Preached in Kilskeery Free Presbyterian Church on March 16th, 2008)

The subject of suicide has once again been thrown into the spotlight. For some time, a series of suicides amongst young people in an area in Wales featured in the headlines. It was suggested that it was the result of a pact amongst the victims or was prompted by what they had read on the internet.

Those suicides have now dropped out of the headlines, but the subject has re-emerged with the news that one of the top policemen in the UK has been found dead and that he likely took his own life.

It does serve to show that suicide is not just something involving the young and the vulnerable.

These recent suicides recorded are all of mature individuals who deemed it the best way of escaping the circumstances that had overtaken them.

The Bible records the suicides of a number of men. Saul and his armourbearer. "Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it. And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him," 1 Samuel 31:4-5.



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Ahithophel. "And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father," 2 Samuel 17:23.

King Zimri. "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died," 1 Kings 16:18.

Judas. "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself," Matthew 27:5.

Irrespective of the circumstances of suicide, it is the outcome of the workings of the master killer, the devil. That I must insist upon. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it," John 8:44.

Furthermore, it is a delusion, for it offers no escape from trouble but for most is the gateway to unimaginable and unending misery.

I say 'for most' because suicide does not result in the damnation of the Christian who yields to that temptation. Sadly, there have been Christians who were deceived of by devil on this matter and felt that taking their own lives was a means to escape their present distressing troubles. It is not a new thing for the devil to deceive a Christian and persuade them to act most foolishly. But it does not bring about their damnation since their souls are saved ETERNALLY and none can pluck them out of the Father's hand! "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand," John 10:28-29.

I wish to observe the teaching that is found in the two questions that comprise our text this evening. May our deliberations prove helpful to any who come in contact with this message and who may be tempted to end their life.

I. THERE IS A TIME TO DIE!

Death for us all is certain.

1. Man is a dying creature. Death was part of our being even in the womb. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," Romans 5:12. Death is the result of sin. "All mankind by their fall lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever." Shorter Catechism, Question 19, Genesis 3:19. The old Puritan sought to preach as "a dying man to dying men and women."

Remebering our mortality is a wise thing!

2. Our death is appointed of God. Consider these Scriptures. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment," Hebrews 9:27. "Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass," Job 14:5. "For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living," Job 30:23. "What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah," Psalm 89:48. "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again," Ecclesiastes 3:20.

3. The time of our death is unknown. "And he said, Behold now, I am old, I know not the day of my death," Genesis 27:2. Isaac obviously felt that his death was near but in fact he lived another 40-odd years! Other Scriptures support the fact that the day of our death is unknown. "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth



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away," James 4:14.

II. WE MAY DIE PREMATURELY

We may die "before our time"! The Bible reveals what is generally true of mankind regarding the length of our days - 70 years. Likewise, generally death comes in old age. But a person may act so as to hasten or bring forward the day of their death and thus meet it before it was due.

1. We may destroy ourselves. Those who commit suicide do, but more than just they do so. Dangerous sports and activities, foolish and reckless lifestyles, smoking drinking etc. How often these things have hastened death and brought it about before, we may humanly say, its time.

2. We may challenge God and bring about our death. God has slain men because of their wickedness. "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the LORD exceedingly," Genesis 13:13. "And Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD; and the LORD slew him," Genesis 38:7. "But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee," Psalm 55:23. Here sinfulness hastens men's demise.

3. We may foolishly neglect the means of life. "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil . . . I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live," Deuteronomy 30:15, 19. "But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death," Proverbs 8:36. "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death," Proverbs 11:19. "The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil," Proverbs 19:23. Many of us who look back in thanksgiving to the mercy of God which rescued us from a wicked life-style are sure that had not God intervened in our lives, we would be in our graves long ago! Getting saved lengthened our days!

III. OUR TEXT CHALLENGES ALL MEN

1. There is no gain from destroying ourselves and dying before our time. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Mark 8:36.

How I wish that those unsaved who see euthanasia as a means to end their misery would recognise that death without Christ is but the beginning of absolute and eternal suffering under God's wrath!

2. Ending our lives prematurely is destruction. It is self destruction. "How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors," Psalm 73:19. "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom," Luke 16:23.

There is no deliverance for the unsaved suicide but a step into utter and eternal destruction!

3. It means the loss of the soul.

Eternal loss. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name," Revelation 14:11.

- Immeasurable loss. "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark 8:37.
- Incomparable loss. The little verse states it well.

"To lose your wealth is much,
To lose your health is more,
To lose your soul is such a loss,
As no man can restore."



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- Inconsolable loss. There is eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth. "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth," Matthew 8:12.
- Unnecessary loss. Why will ye die? Ezekiel 33:11.

There is a means of true escape from the misery of this life, brought on by our sin. It is through the death of Christ. There is healing for sorrow and depression in the atoning blood of Christ. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many," Matthew 20:28.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly," John 10:10.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live," Deuteronomy 30:19.

"Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live," Jeremiah 38:20.

There is eternal life and joy for those who will obey the gospel rather than the erroneous impulses of a despairing heart and mind. How sweet are these words of the Saviour I have just quoted. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

Heed His words, believe His words, rest on His words and enter into the life, the life more abundant that He promises.

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