

Christians And Suicide

'When Ahithophel saw his counsel was not followed, he saddled his donkey, went home to his city, set his house in order and hanged himself. He died and was buried in the tomb of his father' (2 Samuel 17:23). Only the Lord God knows if Ahithophel is in heaven or not but there is not one verse in Scripture condemning him for suiciding.

Not long before Judas betrayed Jesus, He prayed to the Lord God, "While I was with them (the disciples) in the world, I kept them in Your name. Those whom You have given Me I have kept. None of them is lost except the Son of Perdition so the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12). One prophecy regarding the betrayal of Jesus by His friend who ate bread with Him was fulfilled exactly. 'Yes, My own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me' (Psalm 41:9). We know Jesus would have shared meals and eaten bread with Judas and the other disciples dozens of times. Just as Jesus was being arrested He asked Judas, "Friend, why are you here?"

Jesus said, "The Son of Man goes (dies) as it is written about Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born" (Mark 14:21). 'When Judas who betrayed Jesus saw He was condemned, felt remorse and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders saying, "I have sinned and I betrayed innocent blood." ... Judas threw down the pieces of silver in the sanctuary and departed. He went away and hanged himself ... The chief priests took the thirty pieces of silver and bought the Potter's Field ... What was spoken through the prophet (Zechariah) was fulfilled, "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him on Whom a price had been set"' (Matthew 27:3 to 9). The words of Judas were uncannily like Zechariah's prophecy. "If you think it best, give me my wages and if not keep them." So they weighed for my wages thirty pieces of silver. God said to me, "Throw it to the potter, the handsome price I was valued by them!" I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw the silver to the potter in the house of God' (Zechariah 11:12 & 13). 'Judas said, "What are you willing to give me so I should deliver Him to you?" They weighed out for him thirty pieces of silver. From that time Judas sought an opportunity to betray Jesus' (Matthew 26:15 & 16). Jesus knew He was going to be betrayed and by whom but when Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss on the cheek, which is an affectionate action, Jesus seemed shocked. 'Judas who betrayed Jesus gave them a sign saying, "Whoever I kiss, He is the one. Seize Him." Immediately Judas came to Jesus and said, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him. Jesus asked Judas, "Friend, why are you here?"' (Matthew 26:48 to 50). 'While Jesus was still speaking, behold a multitude (of Roman soldiers) and he who was called Judas, one of the twelve was leading them. Judas came near to Jesus to kiss Him but Jesus said to him, "Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"' (Luke 22:47 & 48).

Some people believe Judas was condemned because he suicided. Jesus definitely suggests Judas will end up in a terrible eternal place but it was not because he suicided. Judas was condemned for two reasons but suicide was not one of those reasons. Judas confessed he had sinned by betraying innocent blood and felt remorse but he did not repent of his sin. One reason Judas was condemned was because he was wicked (Acts 1:18). He was a thief. He had never repented nor had he given his heart to the Lord during the three years Jesus shared His ministry with the disciples. 'Mary (Magdalene) took a pound of very precious ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, one of Jesus' disciples who would betray Him said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" Judas said this, not because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief and having the money box used to steal what was put into it' (John 12:3 to 6). The second reason Judas was condemned was because he betrayed Jesus. Jesus called Judas the Son of Perdition meaning the son of destruction or the son of eternal death as revealed in the Book of Revelation. 'The beast you saw was and is not (he disappeared into the lake of fire) will ascend out of the bottomless pit, the abyss then and go into Perdition (the lake of fire)' (Revelation 17:8). This is what Jesus meant when he said of Judas, "The Son of Man goes (dies) as it is written of Him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24). Woe to Judas because he betrayed Jesus and did not repent of his wickedness.

There is no verse in the Bible that says everyone who commits suicide is eternally condemned. That is a teaching of the Catholic church and is not necessarily factual. We know Judas went to a lost eternity because Jesus said so and the church has taken that as a doctrine saying all suicides are eternally lost. That is not Scriptural. Judas was condemned because he was wicked and because he betrayed Jesus then he did not repent. There is no place in heaven for wicked people. If Judas had repented of his sin of betrayal and accepted Jesus as his Saviour, he could have been saved but Judas chose to suicide and once he was dead there was no hope of repentance. In contrast, Peter, who had denied Jesus three times, repented in bitter tears (Matthew 26:75), and went on to become an active apostle, writing the epistles of Peter and preaching the Gospel with fervour.

We are writing this article to reassure Christians, if their loved one took their own life, as long as the deceased knew Jesus, they may not be eternally lost. Just because a born-again Christian suicides when they feel overwhelmed and cannot cope, does not mean they are unsaved, rebellious or wicked. If they repented and accepted the Lord during their lifetime, then they are not under the curse of eternal death. That cannot be said for someone who discarded the Lord and never repented during their lifetime. According to the Bible, nearly all non-believers would most likely end up in the eternal fire no matter how they died because they are under the curse of eternal death as all unrepentant people are. 'Jesus will say to those on the left hand, "Depart from Me you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his (fallen) angels ... These (unsaved, rebellious, wicked people) will go away into eternal punishment but (only) the righteous into eternal life"' (Matthew 25:41 & 46).

God is the sole Righteous Judge and we mortal humans have no right to judge anyone. We have no right to say for certain a person is lost forever because we really do not know that person's heart. Only God knows. We cannot look at the outward appearance of a person because God sees what we cannot see and He looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). This Bible study is to comfort and reassure believers in Jesus, suicides may not go to a lost eternity just because they took their own life. We certainly do not condone suicide because suicide shows a lack of trust in God. No matter how bad life can get, we must always continue to trust in the Lord. Job said, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him. I will maintain my own way before Him" (Job 13:15). Job's life took a terrible turn for the worse but he never contemplated suicide. He said he would maintain his way before the Lord. That took courage! Job did wish he had died as a baby or as a miscarriage and cursed the days he was conceived and his own birthday, and he did yearn for his death (Job 3:1 to 16 & 21; 10:18) but never indicated he wanted to take his own life.

Sometimes life is so hard, some Christians simply cannot cope. One lovely young Christian lad aged just fifteen, had undergone several operations to correct a facial deformity he was born with, always hoping he would one day look normal. When the lad received the news the doctors could do no more for him to improve his looks, he was devastated and he hanged himself in his parent's garage. He had suffered dreadful bullying all of his school life from other children. As Christians, his parents were at peace and were reassured by the Lord their son was safe with Him. Looking back about 2,000 years during the cruel rule of the Romans, several Jewish people escaped to the fortress in Masada. When the Romans closed in, their two choices were to suicide or to allow themselves to be taken by the Romans, knowing the men would be crucified and all of the women and children would be raped and sold for slaves. The entire group suicided rather than be taken by the Romans. Before anyone judges this group they would have to put themselves in their shoes. What could any husband do to try to save his wife from being raped by dozens of men? What would any parent do to try to save their little children from such horror? When people are pushed into a hopeless situation, sometimes they would prefer death rather than face terrible, inhumane torture or to watch their children suffering such a dreadful fate. Scenarios like this one can happen no matter how long we have known the Lord. Certainly, suicide is not an option for the greater majority of believers but if a person is pushed to breaking point, God is merciful and will not reject or destroy someone who has been broken by circumstances (Deuteronomy 4:31). When we give our lives to God we accept a covenant of commitment with Him and even in the most terrible circumstances, God will never forget the covenant and responsibilities He has promised and He will not turn away from those who seek His compassion, graciousness and mercy (2 Chronicles 30:9).

To those who are contemplating suicide, seek the Lord with all your heart. 'Seek your God and you will find Him when you search after Him with all your heart and with all your soul' (Deuteronomy 4:29). Trust Him and do not lean on your own human understanding (Proverbs 3:5). He has said we will have many troubles but He will deliver us in His time (Psalm 34:19) and He can give us a peace beyond our own understanding (Philippians 4:7). We need to give God time to solve our problems because some problems cannot be solved in an instant. Sometimes deep despair can be removed if we will forgive others. Holding unforgiveness or any sin is self-destructive. If you know Jesus, repent of any sin, spend time in prayer and ask Him to show you a way out or He might walk with you in the 'furnace' like He walked with the three Jewish lads (Daniel 3:12 to 30). Life is not always as we want it. We can all be assured the Lord is a Righteous Judge (2 Timothy 4:8). He does not judge according to the outward appearance of people or their circumstances (1 Samuel 16:7) but He judges righteously, testing the heart and the mind or attitude (Jeremiah 11:20). We cannot judge anyone who suicides because we are not in their circumstances. We must let God judge them in righteousness and mercy. God will not accuse or despise those who have been broken by circumstances or have a broken spirit. 'The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart and saves those who have a crushed spirit' (Psalm 34:18). 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit. A broken and contrite heart O God, You will not despise' (Psalm 51:17). 'God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness. He will not always accuse neither will He stay angry forever' (Psalm 103:8 & 9).

Amen and God bless you.

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