

THE SIN OF  
SUICIDE

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# The Sin of Suicide

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*Text:* Matt. 16:21-26; John 12:20-36; Heb. 10:26-30

In this teaching, we will take a biblical look at both the comforting truth and the demanding truth that calls us to discipleship.

Please open your Bible with me to Matthew 16:21. It is here that Jesus declares His high purpose for His Church. Then, having declared the triumph that His Church would experience, He goes on in a further discourse with his disciples to explain that the price of that would be the giving of His life. That offended Peter's taste, and he speaks what perhaps you or I might have been tempted to say on that occasion. In the wake of those remarks, Jesus speaks some highly important words, which are relevant to the crux of what I have to say in this teaching. Before going any further, please read the text in Matthew 16:21-26, and put a bookmark there. Next, please read John 12:20-36.

## *The sin of suicide*

The selection of the title of this message was a very difficult one. It was difficult to select words that would sufficiently state what I felt most needed to be said in so brief a statement as a title allows. But it is a general rule of preaching that if what you have to say can't be effectively set forth in a sensible title, then you are not clear about what you want to say. And what I want to talk about is *the sin of suicide*. There are any number of sins that characterize the race—sins which all of us are guilty of in different degrees. And among other things I am going to say is that all of us are guilty to some degree of the sin of suicide. But that waits to be elaborated later in this teaching.

Before we begin looking at these two texts of Scripture, I would like you to understand my heart in speaking with this title and on this subject. I want to say from the onset that I am not going to make reference to any specific situation—every one of us, in some way or another, directly or indirectly, has been touched by the impact of suicide. I am going to talk about the *temptation* to commit suicide that, at one time or another, I think, approaches

most people—at least it's been my experience in talking with people that's so. The sin of suicide is not in being tempted toward it. The sin of suicide, as I'm going to discuss, is not necessarily a damning sin that violates some aspects of Church tradition.

### *Forces that threaten us*

First, *the title needs to be what it is*. There is such a tendency in our relativistic culture to justify almost anything because it suits our tastes or our feelings. The Church at large is more threatened than is generally realized by the philosophical relativism of our time. That is only one of the forces that threatens us.

The concept of *relativism* is, essentially, that there are *no absolutes* but that every situation is different, and so there cannot be a conclusive set of guidelines that would dictate priorities and righteousness. That is a philosophy which flows from the denial of the existence of an eternal God, and consequently, the denial that there is any revelation of that eternal God's will to be found in any written material, such as we have in the sacred Scriptures of the Bible. Besides *relativism*, there are other forces that threaten us, all of which have to do with the denial of revealed truth in the Word of God: *humanism*, which makes man god, and *hedonism*, which is the pursuit of pleasure as a god. It's another terribly threatening thing in our culture.

The great challenge to every thinking believer is to heed the injunction of Scripture. Romans 12:1 says we are to give ourselves *entirely* to the Lord and not let the world shape us in its mold; to “be not conformed to the world.” And then, the Bible tells us *how* to be transformed. Interestingly, it doesn't say to do that by trying to effect a new kind of conduct. Rather it touches the place where we need first to be transformed—by *the renewal of our mind*.

Our problems are not simply emotional. People live wrong because they *think wrong*. They live crooked because they don't think straight. To walk that *narrow way* to which Jesus Christ has called us doesn't mean He's called us to *narrow-mindedness*, but rather to clear thought. In other words, it isn't a narrow-minded bigot who equals a person walking the narrow way, but a person who is *focused* on one Lord, one Master, and one revelation of His truth, and he or she lets that become *dominant* in their life.

### *Situation ethics*

Out of relativism there flows a system called *situation ethics*. And as we deal with this subject, I don't want to (and I urge you not to) surrender to the situational ethic or the ethical and moral system that flows out of relativism. In other words, the situational ethic says that since there are no absolutes, anything goes—according to whatever suits the situation. The situational ethic means that there are *no binding moral principles* in any given situation; that the situation itself will dictate what moral principles ought to be observed.

## *Casuistry*

A practice among the moral relativist is the formation of moral or ethical problems in an attempt to convince the person who holds to an absolute system that his absolute system really won't work. That formulation of problems for the purpose of dissuading an individual from absolute convictions is called *casuistry*. Casuistry presents a hypothetical (or real) situation in which you are challenged to compromise the moral values or ethical principles you hold. It proposes that your system, in its absolutes, is inadequate to handle the affairs of a changing world, with all of its problems and the complexities of the society around us. Here's an example of a situation that a casuist would present:

Imagine it's World War II, and a Nazi soldier has broken into the home of a woman who has a young child. With a bayonet-tip pointed at the neck of the child, threatening to kill him, the soldier tells the mother that only if she will submit to his sexual advance will he allow the child to continue to live.

The situational ethicist will say to you, "What do you think about that?" and our minds all wrestle with it. Everything in a person of any moral value says a woman should not submit to immorality on any terms. The Lord did not say, "Thou shall not commit adultery unless your baby's life is on the line." But after all, isn't God loving, and didn't God make room for that possibility? And so, the proposal goes, the mother should sacrifice her moral purity because she can be forgiven of that in order to save the baby's life. Or, if the mother did go ahead and submit, would you be the person to stand in judgment of her?

Such situations are posed one after another in order to challenge a person to come to terms with the complicated difficulty of trying to deal in *absolute terms* in a world that has so many *different situations*.

When we come to the subject of suicide that's exactly what you face. Inevitably, people will want to talk about the specific situation that they know about. They want to appeal, as every one of us wants to appeal, to the mercy of God, to the forgiveness of God, and I am not arguing for a moment against that. God's love, mercy, and forgiveness are at the heart of everything of the gospel and the revelation of His Word.

But there is a terrible, creeping paralysis in so much of the Body of Christ. It is the result of a spinelessness resulting directly from a *lack of commitment to abiding absolutes* in the Word of God. The circumstances are yielded to, and the absolutes are required to bend.

In order to serve our own concept of justice, a person would say, for example, in the episode that I just contrived from the casuist's proposal, "Well, certainly you wouldn't ask the mother to

allow her child to be killed before her very eyes just so she could save some kind of chastity.” It really isn’t my call to solve that situation, but neither is it that mother’s call to violate convictions she has about the Word of God; to violate God’s law on the supposition that she is ever able to be the final judge and preserver of the issues of her life.

The changing of values for the purpose of suiting what would seem right to us inevitably has to do with people *taking the issues of life into their own hands*, rather than walking according to what God has revealed, and leaving the issues of life with Him.

When we come to the issue of suicide, we’re dealing with as consummate an example as there is of a person taking their life into their own hands, rather than, as Jesus said, *losing their life for His sake*. And to those who, through the subtle capacities of human mind to distort and pollute (even unintentionally) the truth, let me hasten to say that these words of Jesus do not say that the person who took their own life has, in some noble way, lost it for His sake. Actually the opposite is true. *They saved their life for themselves, on their own terms*.

And what happened is exactly what Jesus said would happen. When you take your life into your own hands, on your own terms—whenever you violate the revelation of God for your own convenience, for your momentary comfort or self-serving, no matter what the situation may be, up to the point of a bayonet at the baby’s throat—inevitably there is loss, not gain. *If you save your life, you lose it*. But if we lose whatever it is that we may be clutching in order to be obedient to what God has said, though human reason can never truly understand or discern the ways of God, the Lord says we will find something of *life* for having done that. We will make a discovery.

## *Euthanasia*

We live in a society moving toward euthanasia. The essence of that acceptance argues that there are situations of physical infirmity so desperate and hopeless that we should put those people out of their pain, as if it were an act of mercy. (Please note that I’m not referring to taking a person who is already clinically dead off artificial life support.)

I understand the pathos and pain of a someone who is watching their loved one suffer. I’m not heartless toward that. *But to take the issues of life and death into our own hands is in direct violation of the Word of God*. The person who refuses to do that will, in denying themselves that right, make discoveries such as those we’ve all heard in testimonies: That people who chose the harder path of submitting to the absolutes of God’s Word instead of taking the path of lesser resistance, found a partnership with One who, at the Cross, walked a path of sorrow to a degree we cannot even fathom. These people *found fellowship with the Lord* and *discovered life in its true power* because they didn’t opt for a simpler, more convenient way. The call of Jesus Christ is to come and follow Him, not to take the path of lesser resistance.

## ***Is the sin of suicide automatically damning?***

Answering this question is the whole purpose of this message: *Is the sin of suicide one for which there is no forgiveness?* to which I begin by saying, “NO.”

I will not declare that dead tradition as being truth because there is no place in the Word of God that can support it. The false line of reasoning held by segments of the Church goes like this: “Suicide, committed as the last act of a person’s life, is an act of murder, and as such, it is a violation of one of the Ten Commandments, therefore,” people who think this way conclude, “suicide is an eternally damning act.” Hear me please: *That is conclusively NOT true on any Scriptural terms.*

I want to say it again: Because a person commits suicide and their last act was a violation of the revealed commandments of God *DOES NOT* mean they are damned. That cannot be verified by the Word of God.

I’m going to take an extended period of time to say some things that are so very basic that, to some of you, it may feel that I am skirting the issue and simply dealing with the obvious. But it’s amazing to me how many obvious things aren’t really that obvious any more to people, and how many fundamental, foundational points of *truth* aren’t understood. Yet until the foundational points are understood, you can’t build a system of life.

So I want to begin by saying *why* it is not true that a person who has committed suicide is automatically damned. And I want to say before we go any further that I’m NOT saying that a person who commits suicide is necessarily automatically saved, either.

## ***Salvation is not based on our works but on the work of Jesus Christ***

First, let’s look at scriptures in the Word of God:

*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... (Rom. 3:21-24)*

*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.” (Rom. 4:5-8)*

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5:1-2)*

These are simply three brief passages taken from one segment of one New Testament epistle. But the theme could be pursued *ad infinitum*. The revelation of the Word of God concerning this great principle is perfectly established in the Word: *It is not within the power of man* to either initiate or inaugurate his own salvation, or to perpetuate it by his own works. We are saved by the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross, and there are no works that we contribute to that saving process. Since there's nothing we contribute to our salvation, then the argument can be extrapolated that there are basically *no works that can alter our salvation*, as long as abiding faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is maintained intact.

The problem with that comes from the response of people who say, "Does that mean you can put your faith in Jesus Christ and live any way that you want?" They ask, "If my works did not contribute to, perpetuate, or eventuate my salvation, then can I do whatever I want and my faith in Jesus Christ will cover it all?"

Theoretically that makes a theological case a person can argue. But it doesn't make an *operational* case because, as we study the Scriptures, it becomes clear that within the person who truly has put their faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit of God has birthed something in them that renders them *incapable of indifferently pursuing sin on a relentless, continual basis*. That's why the Bible says in 1 John 3:9, for example:

*Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*

I used to feel embarrassed and frightened in front of that passage of Scripture because I thought, "*But I still do sin.*" Then I came to understand what any thinking person probably would have known. My fear that I was violating a *letter* of the Word caused me to miss the *spirit* of the Word. The tense of the verb that is in that passage essentially says, the person who is born of God *doesn't keep on sinning*. In other words, once Jesus saves you, *He ruins you for being an effective sinner anymore*. Have you noticed that? It's not that you're incapable of sin, but you don't seem to be able to sin with the same degree of effectiveness, fulfillment, excitement, or joy that you used to. Jesus messes us up for sinning.

### ***The falsehood of self-justification***

People who become *indifferent* toward sinning are pursuing self-justification of a pathway of life that they have selected. Extremely common in our culture today is the pursuit of sexual promiscuity. Promiscuity is defined as any sexual exercise outside of marriage. The reason I give that definition is because there are people who argue that if you have sex outside of marriage with just one partner, and have a real sense of commitment to them, even though you are not married it isn't promiscuous because you are committed to that one person. Sometimes you will even hear it said, "I know the Bible says it's wrong, but we feel so right about it."

We chuckle about it, but the sad thing is, it's not really funny because it's happening all over the place among people who claim Jesus Christ is their Savior. They somehow believe that *because they feel good about it, it's not sin*. But I'm going to tell you right now that there's a spiritual time bomb ticking in those people. Their conscience is being numbed by the spirit of the world, and they are headed on a path toward the loss of their eternal soul. I will talk about that in a little bit.

People don't lose their soul over a single act of sin or even some particular ongoing continual sin. *People lose their soul when their conscience—their spirit—becomes numb and neutralized* by things they ongoingly surrender to until they finally reach a point of terrible, terrible decision. I'm going to talk about that more further on. It's not *physical* suicide, but it is a very real *spiritual* suicide that they carry out.

*Salvation is through Jesus Christ alone*. When a person who knows Jesus Christ takes his or her life, for whatever reason, *they have not, by that single act, overreached the power of the Covenant of God* to save their eternal soul. But it *is* a violation of the breadth and scope of what Jesus Christ has done and the crowning work of Calvary.

There is nothing in the cosmos that approaches the marvel of what took place at Calvary. In our minds, we cannot begin to lay hold of the cosmic event that happened at the Cross. According to Romans 8, something touched the entire universe as a result of the Cross. The whole of creation has been groaning, and that "something" that was released at the Cross is intended by God to *penetrate* through those of us who receive the work of the Cross in our lives.

There's something that is to be *worked in us* that will have cosmic implications in time. It is so magnificent and of such great magnitude that we can hardly lay hold of it. It is a pusillanimous, small view of the Cross that would lock anyone into the chains of eternal darkness because of one single act (or even a set of specific acts, as violating of the principles of believing discipleship as those acts may be)—that on the grounds of those acts alone, a believer could have lost his or her eternal soul. A person who says that doesn't understand the *bigness of the Cross*.

Thankfully, in the years of my pastoral experience, I've had to deal with very few cases of suicide. I think there's a reason, and I don't say this as credit to ourselves at the church. I simply think that *when people understand the redeeming scope of God's grace*, when they understand the spirit of deliverance and the truth of the Word, you *reduce the likelihood of people taking their own lives*. But we will not take the position of attempting to thwart people in indulging themselves in suicide by suggesting something the Bible doesn't say; and the Bible does not say you will lose your eternal soul because you commit suicide.

## *Salvation is only secured through Jesus Christ*

The securing of salvation through Jesus Christ is essentially an important point that needs to be mentioned now because there is such deep emotion when a person takes their own life. There are some who would argue other grounds—that in their sorrow, somehow finding a way to hope so they can neutralize the pain, they need to nullify the pain and say, “Well, I just feel God has received them, I just hope God is merciful, isn’t He, Pastor Jack?”

There are times that I have faced the difficult situation of looking eye to eye with a person whose loved one has committed suicide, and there is no reason whatsoever to believe that that person knew Jesus Christ as their Savior. But you will never find me saying to that person, “No, they are not with God.” I will never say that to anyone because I am not the final judge. Yet I will hold before every honest heart the Word of God:

*“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” (John 3:36)*

*“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)*

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)*

*“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” (John 3:17)*

*“He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:18)*

*“And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)*

*“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)*

My purpose in saying those words of absolute revelation of the pathway of salvation is this: *Salvation is in Jesus Christ alone.* I say it lest there be anyone who misunderstands what I’ve said—that suicide is not necessarily a damning act. I say it to clarify the notion that anyone would have that, in the emotion or agony of living out the loss of a loved one who didn’t know Jesus Christ, we cannot argue with ourselves and plead with God after the fact. “Is there...somehow... can You make room for them?” It’s almost defying God to alter His provision and revelation to suit the pain of our moment.

## *Our call to respond*

I don't believe it is my call (or anyone else's) to take the implications of the fact that salvation is only in Jesus Christ and to press those lovelessly against the heart of a person who (by whatever means) has lost a loved one who never have received Jesus Christ. It is not my call to insist against their heart-cry, or on some doctrinal purity at that juncture, and say to the grieving person, "I'm sorry they never received Christ. They're lost and they're in hell." That isn't our task.

But neither is it my call when dealing in general like this to hold forth a notion that there is some flexibility and that people can kind of squeeze in. That God shoehorns people in at the last moment because, well, He just kind of felt a little different about it when they had been defiant and indifferent toward God all their lifetime.

Let me say one other thing about dealing with people whose loved one, as far as we know, is lost. *We need to keep our mouths shut.* The primary reason for that is because *neither you nor I know* what last-minute negotiations may have taken place between a human being and the living God. I am not trying to concoct a means by which we can shoehorn people in, but I submit to you that between the time a person takes the overdose of drugs and lays there in their groggy stupor, we—who don't know what has transpired over the years or months of that person's life and brought them to that moment—we *don't know* in what way the living, loving God may *reveal Himself* to them and deal with them in that moment.

We don't know what may transpire in those virtually eternal moments from the time the person leaves the top of the bridge and when their body splashes into the water below. We cannot know what may take place in those moments. *We don't know so many things, we would be wise to say nothing* other than to be loving, receptive, and comforting to people. But to attempt to compute our own programs of salvation with legal loopholes where our emotions want one *must be avoided*. As surely as we must avoid legalism, we need to avoid the spirit of liberalism that says, "Anything goes if it makes you feel better."

## *Salvation, while an irrevocable contract, is not an irreversible arrangement*

We need to look at a delicate balance between two things, while still dealing with the question, "If a person commits suicide, are they eternally lost?" I want to talk about how people lose their salvation. They don't lose it by committing suicide.

Salvation is not an irreversible arrangement. But salvation is an *irrevocable contract* from God's side. When God offers us salvation, that is a contract, and it is not tentative on His side. Here are two verses of Scripture: Jesus said in John 6:37, *He that comes unto me I will not cast out.* Say that with me, will you? Let's read the whole verse:

*"All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."*  
(John 6:37-40)

If it's true of you, say out loud right now, "I've come to Jesus and He's going to keep that promise to me." Go ahead. Say it. Next, John 10:27-29. Let's read those verses together.

*"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."*

Salvation is an irrevocable contract from God's side. But, in contrast, there is a *timeless covenant of free will* that overarches that. In other words, God has made an irrevocable covenant of salvation with all who come to his Son Jesus Christ. He has said, "No one or no thing can take you out of My hand." Jesus has said, "I will never turn away anyone who comes to Me." He doesn't say it on the basis of their merits, their works, or their accomplishments. He doesn't say if they commit suicide, they're washed up with Him. He doesn't change His plan based on what we do. *That is on His side.*

But that does not violate the fact that there is a timeless covenant God also has with all intelligent and free moral beings. That's *our power of choice*, and *He never rescinds that*. Being saved does not make you an automaton; it does not turn you into a robot.

### ***So how can a person lose their soul?***

I would like for us to turn to the 10th chapter of Hebrews, and I want us to read a demanding passage of Scripture that tells how a person can lose their soul. I'm doing this because I want everyone to understand that *while it is error* to suppose that a person who commits suicide loses their eternal soul, that *does not* mean it is not possible for a person to lose their soul when they have been saved. But it is an extremely demanding and difficult thing to lose your soul. If you want to, you can do it. It can be done. And there are people who have done it.

*For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? (Heb. 10:26-29)*

In writing to the Hebrews in this passage of Scripture, the writer concludes in verse 39, “*We are not of those who draw back to perdition but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.*” Speaking about himself and those to whom he is writing, he is saying, “But we are not that kind of people.”

However, it would be meaningless to deal with if there were not such people. And it would be meaningless for it to be outlined in Scripture if it were not possible for a person to become so *immune to the deterioration of their spiritual life*, and their attitudes toward the living God, that they begin to broach this frightening territory. It is territory in which the Bible says an individual may, by an action of their own will, *disannul the contract of salvation* that God has irrevocably provided for them

The participle that occurs there, “if we sin willfully,” is in the present tense, and it means the same thing we were saying earlier. It is referring to a person who *commits themselves to a pathway of ongoing sinning with indifference*. They have no significant spirit of repentance about their actions.

I’m not talking about the fact that every single one of us sin all the time. I’m talking about people who *commit* themselves to a pathway of sin—people who *sin willfully*. As a result of this, the Bible says that what remains for them is a certain “fearful expectation of judgment” and “fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” That’s the same thing as Satan and all of his hosts. It says that anyone who has rejected Moses’ law died without mercy ON the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much worse do you suppose the punishment will be for the person who:

1. Tramples the Son of God under foot;
2. Counts the Blood of the Covenant, by which he or she was sanctified, as a common thing; and
3. Insults the Spirit of grace.

### ***Those are the three means by which a person may dismantle the covenant of salvation***

It is saying that a person who, in the continuum of their *apostasy* (that word has to do with a moving outside the circle of Covenant because of their willful commitment to that which is opposite to the will and way of God), commits themselves to sin. There’ve only been a few cases in our church, but it’s rankling to me if there is even one person who supposes that because they circle with a group of people who love Jesus, and because they go through all the motions to identify with “Jesus stuff,” that those things alone qualify them as saved, apart from a commitment to Christ. The ability of a person to cite doctrine (for the Bible says no one can quote Scripture better than Satan), sound spiritual, or talk religious, doesn’t mean a thing. The bottom line is, *is that person committed to Jesus Christ?*

We hear of people living in outright, ongoing sinning. Generally it has to do with sexual immorality or other expressions or moral sin. I've dealt with people who, by the way that they treated their family, beat their wives, or handled their business affairs, were anything but a disciple of Jesus Christ. They somehow do not recognize their conscience is becoming numbed and seared. They are headed down a frightening path about which the Bible warns. It is the pathway of people who continue to willfully sin after they have received knowledge of the truth. Let's look at these three things that dismantle the covenant of salvation:

### ***1. Trample Jesus underfoot***

First, they trample Jesus underfoot. What does that mean? The word that is used there is an interesting one. It's the same one Jesus used when he was talking about being careful about what you say in front of people. He said, "Don't cast your pearls before swine" (Matt. 7:6). He was talking about taking the precious truth and wisdom of God and using it to *demean* the Son of God. A person who tramples Jesus underfoot comes to a place where they say to themselves, "I don't care what Jesus says," and they walk roughshod with indifference over Jesus.

### ***2. Esteem the Blood of the Covenant unworthy***

The second thing is that they esteem the Blood of the Covenant unworthy. In other words, they *devalue* that which is at the heart of a person's ability to know the forgiveness of God. For it is the Blood that has paid the price of salvation, and they come to a point where the Blood of Christ is considered a *common thing*. It has no real worth.

The beginning indication of that would be when a person no longer has any serious concern about the cleansing power of the Blood of Jesus as it would work in their lives and bring deliverance. They regard the Blood only as a "convenient rinse" to be applied to some record in Heaven so they can say, "I've been justified by faith, and I'm going to Heaven." But they don't allow the Blood of Jesus Christ to minister the *ongoing life* and *power* of the Son of God while feeding regularly at the Lord's Table. It becomes a common thing to them, and there comes a *dangerous indifference* toward that which redeems, delivers, frees, and purifies.

### ***3. Insult the Holy Spirit***

Thirdly, they insult the Holy Spirit. How do you insult the Holy Spirit? Jesus spoke about the "unpardonable sin" (see Matt. 12:31, Mark 3:28). While this passage in Hebrews 10 is not discussing the unpardonable sin, the outworking of the whole thing announces it as such. The specific steps taken by a person who rescinds the Covenant with God arrives at the same place outside the Covenant, and therefore inherits eternal loss.

The *unpardonable sin* in Jesus' ministry had to do with *people attributing to the Lord Jesus the works of Satan*. The Holy Spirit, through the miracle ministry of Jesus, was casting out demons. So in order to justify themselves, people said, "What Jesus is doing is really deception. Its really the Devil." The truth was that by His power, the Holy Spirit was extending and establishing the rule of the Kingdom through Him.

*"Because you say I cast out demons by Beelzebub. And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you."* (Luke 11:18-20)

The Pharisees were threatened by the manifest reality and power of Jesus' ministry. They tried to say that power was of the Devil. Jesus' response was, in essence: "You can speak against the Father. You can speak against Me and be forgiven. But when you blaspheme the Holy Spirit by attributing His works to Satan, you are in the territory in which there is no forgiveness in this world or in the next."

There is something frightening and sobering about that. At the heart of it is the matter of insulting the Holy Spirit. It doesn't have to do with petty issues, but with *Lordship*. It has to do with whether the Kingdom is allowed to rule. It has to do with your response to the Holy Spirit's insistence that Jesus is Lord over these issues of your life. It has to do with when the Holy Spirit comes to say, "Jesus must be Lord in this area. I will crowd out the works of darkness in your life," but there is a *persistence of indifference* on our part—a persistence to the point that we finally say (though perhaps not in words), "Spirit of God, leave me alone!" The person then withdraws themselves from the arena into which grace has ushered them in the provision of salvation.

### ***How salvation is (and isn't) lost***

I am dealing with this because, first, I want to make very clear that the idea suicide would automatically and eternally damn a soul ought *not* to torment or frighten any believer. Second, because that idea is prevalent enough in the Church at large, and because there are people who believe it, it must be addressed. I can't imagine anybody *wanting* to believe it. But I can imagine people who feel *obligated* to believe it because they wonder, "How can a person stand before God, and say, 'My last act was murder, and I violated one of Your Commandments,' and still expect eternal hope?"

I want to make clear that by the act of suicide, a person doesn't lose their soul. But if we're going to deal with that subject, we've got to go all the way and deal with the fact that a person *can* lose their soul. We can't be indifferent to that truth, though it is a difficult thing to do.

*People don't lose their salvation by accident.* You don't lose your salvation because you had a flash of temper. I hate to even concede this ground because I've been very direct about the sin of immorality and its undesirability, its unrighteousness, and its evil, so let me go one step further and say what is the truth of God's Word: No more than the act of suicide is necessarily going to damn the soul of a person who has entered into the covenant of salvation with God and not denied that, an act of immorality isn't going to damn a soul either.

The problem is that once people begin to *presume on the grace of God*, they move into territory in which their *heart* and *conscience* toward God become *neutralized* and *numb*. That's what the "willful sinning" of Hebrews 10 is talking about—people who, in a continuum, get on a path where they're moving more and more distantly away from *true discipleship* to Jesus Christ. They are living under the delusion that they are disciples when, in fact, the Covenant is being *dismantled* by their violation of it at point after point after point after point.

### ***The purpose of this life***

*"Then, are you saying, Pastor Jack, that since suicide does not apparently constitute, in the light of the Word, a rescinding of the believer's pact with God, which is the covenant of salvation, that it makes no difference? That suicide may be committed with virtual impunity?"*

I want to say (and the text we've read at the beginning demonstrates) that the issues of life are greater than we suppose. The issue of our eternal salvation, no matter how everlasting, does not overshadow the fact that *God has saved us for His purpose*. And I want to talk about the purpose of this life. I've already said Jesus has called us to follow Him. And He gave his life; He didn't save it.

It's a shallow concept that only sees this life as determining our eternal salvation. True, there *is* one question that is the ultimate issue of this life; nobody can bypass that. Every person *decides in this lifetime* whether they are going to be in the presence of God eternally or apart from God eternally.

But Jesus Christ did not come *only* to make a way for people to get to Heaven forever. I'm not minimizing that righteous provision or the high joy of eternity with Him. But what He came to do is to bring *life* into the *light*. He came to *infuse people* with the purposes of God so that the life of the Kingdom would infuse a purpose-less world and begin to govern peoples' lives and their behavior. He came that the power of the Kingdom would encroach upon the darkness. He came that His people, being *salt* in the Earth, would see its decadence overturned because of the purifying, preserving, penetrating power of that salt. And that believers, being *light* in the world—not light shining forever in the starry firmament, (though we shall shine as the stars forever in some marvelous poetic sense of that word)—would *transmit the life of God in them* to a dead planet.

Salvation is thinly perceived today by so many believers as merely, “Jesus is just for me and my fulfillment.” He does want to fulfill us. He does want to prosper us, to heal our emotions. But that isn’t the sum and substance of His purpose. He wants you to *follow* Him, and following Him will inevitably *bring you to a place* where you begin to give your life away, not seize your life to yourself.

### ***Suicide is an act of self-preservation***

I hurt saying this, lest I offend some wounded individual’s memory of another person, but no matter how you slice it, dear ones, the most conclusive demonstration of self-preservation is suicide. If your life has been painfully touched by suicide, I would not wave in front of you some unkind or loveless “preacherly” statement. But I submit that the reason for the depth of your pain is because what you are dealing with is a *consummate act of selfishness*.

You don’t want to think of the person you lost as selfish. They were dear, they were loving, and they were hurt and pained. But so have been multiplied millions who never inflicted on those around them that degree of pain you are going through. And there are multiplied millions of people who, even in their pain and torment, yet pursued with disciplined purity the way of Jesus Christ and not only survived, but also found deliverance and light. Let us not submit to the selfishness of a world that pleads with us to *concede to our feelings* rather than to the revelation of God. If God’s truth is imbibed, it will take over your system and make you free.

I’ve had people who lost someone to suicide say, “I wonder if the same thing could happen to me.” Well, the same thing could happen to any one of us if we concede. There’s not a righteous one among us who can save ourselves, and there’s not a righteous one among us who can argue preemption from the likelihood of surrender to ourselves at such point. The reason for dealing with this truth is to hold the starkness of the sin of suicide in front of us and look at both the *comforting* truth and the *demanding* truth that calls us to *discipleship*. Because the greatest comfort is walking the pathway of Jesus and watching Him work deliverance.

### ***After suicide (or death), then what?***

Now, we need to deal with a very difficult point and that is, to *remove the false notion* that the person who commits suicide leaves the distress of their present life and is suddenly wafted into the joyous presence of Jesus.

You ask, “Well, aren’t they with the Lord?” Oh yes. The Bible says specifically to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5). There is no “limbo” where the soul sort of aimlessly floats about, awaiting a moment of eternal accounting. There is no such thing as “soul sleep.”

Paul said to the Philippians in chapter 1 (paraphrased): “When I face impending execution, I think to myself, should I say ‘God, deliver me from the Roman sword that’s going to take my life’? Should I say, ‘Lord, deliver me for the sake of ministry’? Or should I just say, ‘Its been a long struggle all these years. I think I’d like to go home.’” He says, “Sometimes I wonder which I’d rather,” but the apostle concludes, “I made the decision right there.”

Paul would not have been wrestling with the decision if there were some kind of soul sleep, limbo, or in-between. He knew he’d be with the Lord. He says (paraphrased), “I wonder if it would be better to depart with Christ. I’ve worked a long, hard time here in serving the Lord, and I’d like to go home. I’ve taken enough lumps, enough beatings, been through enough shipwrecks, had enough hell boiling around me, served God faithfully enough, and I want to go home to my reward.”

And he well might have, but here’s the decision Paul makes:

*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose, I cannot tell. For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. (Phil. 1:21-26)*

In essence, Paul is saying, “I’ve decided to stay here as long as I can because it’s better to be serving people than it is to serve my own convenience and go with Jesus.”

We don’t believe in purgatory. The Bible doesn’t teach such a thing. So, what *do* we believe in? Somehow there exists in the Body of Christ the idea that a person who commits suicide has suddenly left whatever it was of the turmoil and difficulties they had and been automatically released. A bullet through the skull, or by whatever means, suddenly in the next instant, they’re with the Lord, and life is beautiful. They’re singing in the heavenly choir and with Jesus. There’s nothing facetious in what I’m saying. While there is no limbo or purgatory, believers do face a *moment of accountability before the throne of Jesus Christ*, their Lord who died to give them life. And I submit to you that standing before Jesus Christ and accounting for what we have done with our life is not some little moment of ecstasy where we start practicing with the heavenly choir.

The Bible puts it in terms like these:

*For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has build on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire. (1 Cor. 3:11-15)*

Everything that we have been and done as a redeemed child of God is marshaled into the presence of the Lord, where it is tested by fire. And it says that it's possible for everything that a person did with their life as a believer to be loss, *yet they will still be saved.*

But I want to ask you the question as to how readily you might be likely to tune your soul to an eternal choir the instant that Jesus says: "I love you and I receive you from the pain of your failure. And you are forgiven and you may enter into the presence of the Father. *But everything you were to be for Me has been lost.* And I call you to account to Me how, My child, after My having shown you My love and forgiveness, could you waste it in a moment?"

I don't see a person spinning from that moment and joining in some grand hallelujah chorus. When, in Revelation 21, the Bible says that God shall wipe away all tears, commentators have asked if, in the moments of awareness when we stand before God and see how we've wasted the marvel of the grand salvation He gave us, there shall not be a time of self-loathing—a time of being so overwhelmed by the Love that received you in spite of how you wasted everything. The Love that, even in that moment, does not condemn you but embraces you in total receptivity—but nonetheless, your soul bows in that moment and says, 'I've wasted it all, and I'm sorry.'

Who can suppose that a person can take the gift of life, dash it to destruction, and go singing into the presence of the living God? I plead with you, loved ones, be gone with the foolishness of the world-mind that fills us with such ignorance in the name of theology; in the name of a *false notion that salvation preempts responsibility.*

We are called to eternal salvation by a Love that embraces us with such depth, we cannot begin to fathom it. Even in that moment of recognized wastefulness, still that prodigal shall enter into a time of feasting. There shall be a clothing of that prodigal with righteousness. We shall experience the ring of redemption being placed on our finger in the presence of God, and there shall come the time of joining in eternal song. *But I think not that it springs from that first moment of passage with relative indifference and consummate selfishness out of the pain of the moment, trying to escape responsibility when God has called us to it, and we are accountable.*

## ***Stewardship of life itself***

It hurts me to deal with that truth. Situations come to mind: what of the person who took their life in a drunken stupor? In a moment when they were so high on drugs that they didn't even know what was happening? What of them?

Let me ask a question even more penetrating than that. What of the person whose *self-centeredness is breeding a slow suicide?* What of believers who drink alcohol or indulge in unhealthy

living, be it physically, mentally, or emotionally? While not abandoning life in a careless moment, they are yet casting it away little by little. What of those who inhale nicotine to the point that cancer takes their lives decades ahead of their time?

I ask you, loved ones, what will be the scene in the presence of Christ when our Lord will ask, “[Insert your name here], what have you done with the life I gave you?” What of the young person who drives recklessly and crashes their vehicle around a pole? They are not the victim of somebody else’s foolishness; they are the victim of their *own* recklessness, and they lose forty years of committed service to Jesus Christ. What of *that kind of suicide*?

What of the “suicide” of overeating to the point that a body’s heart cannot sustain itself, and we lose years that might be given in faithful service? Of overwork because we are driven by a self-appointed ethic that compels us to attain some success *which God could have given to us by His if we would have let Him*? But we ruin ourselves, stampeded by fear. What of the “suicide” that results from immorality? An idle reckless moment of indifference, the conception of a child, and then abortion. Or the numbing of the mind of a man who doesn’t bear responsibility for a child he has begotten.

What kind of “suicide” on your own soul have you been guilty of? It is the sin that nags, screams, and hollers inside that you have violated life.

## ***Accountability with all our life***

*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*  
(1 Cor. 3:16)

The whole thing has to do with what the Bible says is the defiling of the temple of God—that even if *one* thing was out of order in the temple, it was considered defiled. The same word in the Bible used to describe the violation of a marriage contract is also used to describe a spendthrift—that one should not be a *waster* of the resources given to them. And that figure struck me so powerfully when it talks about not wasting the temple of God, which is your body. Jesus, as our heavenly Bridegroom says, “I want your body” –not in the carnal, lewd way that we think of in this culture. Jesus wants to fill you with His Spirit and life, that your body, being a temple of His Spirit, may be a center of *ministry*—of life, health, strength, and testimony. He wants to dwell in us so that we don’t violate the marriage contract He has with His Bride, the Church. He doesn’t want us to become spendthrifts or wastrels of the life He has given to you and me.

The Word of God calls us to be people who come to an *accountability* with our life in all of its detail. Your body is His temple. Don’t use it for yourself. Don’t violate redemptive purpose. All of us need to come under the judgment of the Holy Spirit—not *damning* judgment but the *discerning, purifying* judgment of the Holy Spirit to account for our lives before the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, Paul responds to a report of sexual immorality in the church, writing, in essence, “That person in the church who is fornicating, violating the Body of Christ, violating their own body and the body of the one with whom they participate—deliver that one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh so his soul can be saved.” That’s a frightening passage. It essentially says to pray that something will happen that they will lose their physical life so that at least their spirit will be saved. Later in 2 Corinthians, we learn that the person he was writing about repented, but what happens when someone whose life has been shortened by sinning stands before the Lord? It is not a question of their eternal soul hanging in the balance, but a matter of their having to be accountable before God.

## *What shall we do?*

If suicide is a scripturally unacceptable way to handle life and its problems, what should we do? Here are five things:

### *1. Release all that has happened to God.*

First, release all that has gone on before to God. Put an end to questions that torment us by reason of guilt. “Could I have made a difference?” “Would he not have taken his life if I had been there?” “Would she not have killed herself if I had been more sensitive, if I had made that phone call, if I had...” Loved ones, you cannot flip it around. Release everything into the hands of God and His mercy.

There are people who are angry and emotionally hurt by a suicide. That needs to be released. There are people who are ashamed because of attempts they have taken on their own life, and the Enemy uses that against them. Sometime back, ministering in the northern part of the nation, God gave me a word of knowledge regarding a woman who was present. “There’s a woman here in this service right now,” I said, “and you always wear a long-sleeved blouse to cover the scars where you once attempted to take your life. Jesus wants you to know that He is delivering you today from the shame of that attempt.” It was a mighty moment.

After the service, a woman came up to me and unbuttoned the cuff of her blouse. She pushed it back, tears rolling down her eyes, to reveal the scar. She was radiant with that sense of release. She wasn’t proud of what she’d done, but neither was she bound by the shame of it any longer. *The guilt, the shame, and the anger needs to be cast down.* They are the accusations of the Devil. Release all that’s gone before to God.

## 2. *Recognize that the temptation to commit suicide is not sin.*

Secondly, recognize the thought or the temptation to commit suicide is not sin. Jesus was tempted to suicide. The Devil took him up to the pinnacle of the temple and said, “Go ahead. Jump off. It’s a good way to verify who you are” (see Luke 4:9). Jesus was tempted to suicide. He wasn’t being driven by some sense of remorse or self-centeredness or fear or darkness of His soul. But he was being tempted to suicide. The thought or temptation to commit suicide is not sin—it *is demonic*. It is satanic. Get that pinned down. “The thief comes to steal and to kill and to destroy” (John 10:10 ). Take a look at these examples:

- Satan is the one who suggested suicide to Jesus.
- Judas committed suicide, and the Bible explicitly says only hours before, Satan entered him.
- Saul committed suicide, and the night before, he had made a visit to a sorceress, the witch of Endor. He was dabbling in the things of Satan.

## 3. *Resist the Devil.*

The temptation to suicide is satanic. That tells us something. It tells us that there’s *deliverance* from it. It tells us there is *victory* over it. We can tread underfoot all the works of the Devil. Here’s what you do: *Resist the Devil*. Resisting the Devil has to do with:

- Taking a stance on the grounds of the Scriptures.
- Taking a position on the grounds of the Cross.

Resisting the Devil has to do with (*listen closely!*) a *retreat* into the *fortress* of God’s provision, which is the precise inverse of the dismantling of Covenant that we described earlier: People trample underfoot the Lord Jesus Christ; they esteem the Blood of the Covenant unworthy, and they insult the Holy Spirit. Now if those are the things that dismantle a salvation, think of the things that are the *inverse* of that, and they add up to the *power to resist Satan*. They bring fortress to a human soul. Instead of trampling Jesus underfoot or discarding the merit or the power of Jesus, begin to *exalt Jesus* in every detail of your life.

## 4. *Put on the helmet of salvation.*

Circle yourself with praise. Plead the merciful provision of the Blood. Join with people who honor the power of the Cross and the redemptive work of Christ. Look up to Jesus, and let the Blood have its power. And, the Bible says in Ephesians 6:17, put on the helmet of salvation.

I remember a time when I was tormented by terrible thoughts of a lost sense of worth. Satan demeaned me and beat on me, and the key to my deliverance from that was saying, “Lord, I put on the helmet of salvation by placing the power of Jesus’ Blood from His Cross around my head right now. Lord, begin to dissolve that fly-like buzzing that comes against me and constantly harps on my worthlessness.” Over the ensuing days (it didn’t happen in an instant), the presence of that crown, that helmet of salvation, began to dissolve the powers of hell. *If you will honor the power of the Blood, it will work deliverance.* Resistance to the Devil is exercised by *retreating into the fortress of God’s provision.* It is often a wrestling match, but with the resources of Jesus—the Blood of the Covenant, the power of the Holy Spirit, and God’s grace—not our works—Satan can’t pin you. *Hallelujah.* And you will move into the dimension of His victory.

### ***5. Surround yourself with saints.***

Get together with brothers and sisters in the Lord. Any time that the works of darkness begin to haunt or torment you, or tell you anything that would breach your sense of responsibility with the life that Christ has given you, come before the Lord and begin to exalt His Name. Appeal by the power of the Blood, and enter into a wrestling match. And to ensure that you don’t get weary, *get with the brothers and sisters.* The Lord has given us each other. And I will tell you, folks, there will never be one suicide in the Body of Christ when the brothers and sisters stand together and move in the resources that are given to us in Jesus Christ.

### ***Conclusion***

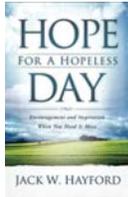
Let me finish by asking you, loved one: Do you need to be freed from anger or shame or pain caused by someone in your life who committed suicide? *Jesus is present to heal.* Do you need to be delivered from recurring lies of the Adversary saying, “That’s the way your life will count most—if you’ll throw it away”? *The Holy Spirit can deliver you.* The Devil tries to blur the distinction of your accountability before Christ. But Christ has given you *life* in order for you to give it away to people who *need* life, and whose plight is multiplied times worst than yours. They need someone who will love them and reach to them with Christ’s love and life. But when you become so blurred in the midst of your own torment and sorrow, Satan begins to succeed, telling you, “This is the way out, this is the way out!”

Yes, you heard Pastor Jack saying you won’t necessarily lose your soul. That’s true. But remember, you also heard Pastor Jack say that **Jesus has a much better plan for you.** Because whatever you’re going through, it will be in the midst of that you will find what your life is about. So why miss the greatest discovery of your life by ending it? Jesus says, “If you’ll refuse taking your life for *your* sake and instead, lose it for *My* sake, You’re going to find what I have for you.”

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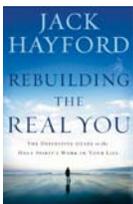
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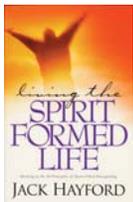
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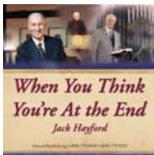
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