

FBC POWELL, 6-11-17 AM NOTES
"The Culture of Death, Suicide, and the Bible"
Various Scriptures

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."

John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."

I. The Culture of Death

"The next candidate for arbitrary reclassification as nonpersons are the elderly. This will become increasingly so as the proportion of the old and weak in relation to the young and strong becomes abnormally large, due to the growing antifamily sentiment, the abortion rate, and medicine's contribution to the lengthening of the normal life span. The imbalance will cause many of the young to perceive the old as a cramping nuisance in the hedonistic lifestyle they claim as their right. As the demand for affluence continues and the economic crunch gets greater, the amount of compassion that the legislature and the courts will have for the old ones does not seem likely to be significant, considering the precedent of the nonprotection given to the unborn and newborn."
—Francis Schaeffer

II. Suicide

"This verb [murder refers to] an unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought, either expressed or implied..."
The Complete Word Study Old Testament

A. The Big Question: Can a Person Who Commits Suicide Go to Heaven?

Three Basic Views Among Protestants Concerning Suicide and Salvation:

1. A true Christian would never commit suicide, since God wouldn't allow it.
2. A Christian may commit suicide, but would lose his salvation by doing so.
3. A Christian who commits suicide does not lose his salvation and would go to Heaven.

1 John gives several tests that involve the pattern of a person's life. If the pattern of a person's life is sin without genuine confession and repentance, no love of God's commands and no strong desire to obey them, agreeing with the world's values in words and actions, making a final break from other Christians and leaving of the church, and habitually hating another person or group, then no matter how adamant they are about being saved, they in reality are not saved. We are not saved by the pattern of our lives, but the pattern of our lives give evidence as to whether our salvation is real.

Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV) "And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, **having forgiven us all our trespasses**, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross."

John 10:27-29 "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will 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 the Father's hand."

1 **John 3:9a** says, "No one who is born of God practices sin..."

2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV) "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

B. 13 Reasons Why Not to Choose Suicide

1. The Bible Teaches that Life Is Sacred

Genesis 1:26a-27 “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

2. Your Body Does Not Belong to You

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

3. Suicide Is Self-Centeredness in Its Worst Form

4. Suicide Is Not Brave or Noble

5. Suicide Is the Ultimate Rejection of God’s Sovereignty

Romans 8:28-29a “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son...”

6. Suicide for Revenge Denies the Ultimate Justice of God

Romans 12:18-19 (NIV) “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay.’”

7. Suicide Results in Permanent Scars on Loved Ones

8. Suicide Is Not a Peaceful Death

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NIV) “If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”

9. Suicide Reveals a Deficient Fear of God

10. Suicide Never Leaves Anyone Better Off

11. Physical Death Is Not the End

12. Suicide Involves Man Seeking to Take God’s Place

13. There Is a God-Honoring Biblical Way to Die Today

Matthew 10:38-39 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”

Luke 9:23-24 “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”

First Baptist Church Powell 06 11 17 AM

The Culture of Death, Suicide, and the Bible

Various Scriptures

The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” The body in which our soul and spirit are housed is not really ours to do with as we please. It belongs to the Lord. That biblical truth (that body belongs to God) speaks volumes to the controversial and much in the news topic of suicide. The word “suicide” was coined in 1651. It is a compound word. It is the word for “self” (*sui*) and “to kill” (*cide*). Suicide is the purposeful taking of one’s own physical life.

At the beginning, we need to make a distinction between suicide and the willful sacrifice of one’s life for others. A soldier who is killed while running into heavy gunfire to save others is not suicide. A fireman who is killed while trying to save a child from a burning home is not guilty of suicide. Jesus said in John 15:13: “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.” Suicide is the purposeful taking of one’s own life. There are about 29,000 “successful” suicides a year in the United States. In comparison there are about 19,000 murders a year. It is estimated that roughly 500,000 people will attempt suicide this year. Here are some other relevant statistics: Suicide is the third leading cause of death for people ages 15-25. Females are more likely to attempt suicide, but males are four times more likely to “successfully” commit suicide. [Statistics from ERLC article, *Suicide from a Christian Perspective*].

There are very few listening to this message that have not in some way been impacted by suicide. I remember a young man that was a member of the church that I pastored in Columbus, Ohio, who sensed a call into full time ministry. He left a good job and, with his wife and three children, he went back to school. After graduating from a Bible college in Kentucky, he was called to pastor a church close to Summerset, Kentucky. From the outside everything looked fine and then one day I heard the shocking news that he had taken his own life. Another pastor that I knew, here in the Knoxville area, took his own life. I’ve had to go with a father to tell his two school age children that their mother had taken her own life. I have spoken at funeral services of people who had taken their own life. I can assure you, from experience, that the consequences of suicide are devastating for those left behind.

While I have spoken to the issue of suicide several times from this pulpit, I believe that this is the first time I have given an entire message on the subject. One of the reasons that I am preaching this message is because of the strange growing popularity of suicide, especially among teenagers.

One of the reasons that many young people have recently turned their minds and emotions to suicide is the popularity of the streamed Netflix series entitled *13 Reasons Why*. This program is about a teenage girl’s audio recording left behind after her suicide which explains why she killed herself. The criticism of the program is that it makes suicide seem rational given the things the girl was dealing with. Some go further and say that it actually glorifies suicide. The thing that magnifies the danger of this program is that because it is streamed it can be watched by means of a tablet or even on a cell phone. The result is that even though parents may control what is watched on the big screen TV in the family room, their teens are often watching it on their cell phones or another portable device. I don’t know the motive of the people at Netflix, but the consequence of watching this program is that it makes suicide seem plausible – seem like a reasonable act. [Much of the content relating to *13 Reasons Why* came from an article by Russell Moore entitled, “Does ‘13 Reasons Why’ Glamorize Teen Suicide?”].

Let's examine the culture of death that has exploded in our country that makes troubled people more open to suicide. Then, we will examine suicide in light of the Bible. My desire is to equip parents to talk to their children about this epidemic of suicide, but also to equip Christians to help anyone that is a suicide threat.

I. The Culture of Death

When the infamous Supreme Court case that legalized abortion – *Roe v. Wade* – was handed down in 1973, many astute analyzers of the culture saw it as the first step to what they called “a culture of Death.” We were warned that *Roe v. Wade* was just the beginning. The killing of infants would open the door to a lot more. Those who were warning us about what was to come were called *fear mongers*, *nut cases*, and other names that were even worse. I remember reading after the abortion ruling warnings that it was a small step from taking the life of the unborn to euthanasia. Euthanasia is defined as “the act or practice of killing somebody who has an incurable illness or injury, or of assisting that person to die.” No one is laughing at those “fear mongers” now. Euthanasia (now called *Physician Assisted Suicide* or *Medical Aid in Dying*) is now legal in Oregon, Montana, Washington, Vermont, California, Colorado, and Washington D. C. When we see this history, it is easy to believe that the next step is to *require* physician assisted suicide for the incurably ill who are no longer productive and are a drain on the health care system.

The renowned Christian Philosopher, Francis Schaeffer, in 1978 wrote this (five years after *Roe v. Wade*): “The next candidate for arbitrary reclassification as nonpersons are the elderly. This will become increasingly so as the proportion of the old and weak in relation to the young and strong becomes abnormally large, due to the growing antifamily sentiment, the abortion rate, and medicine's contribution to the lengthening of the normal life span. The imbalance will cause many of the young to perceive the old as a cramping nuisance in the hedonistic lifestyle they claim as their right. As the demand for affluence continues and the economic crunch gets greater, the amount of compassion that the legislature and the courts will have for the old ones does not seem likely to be significant, considering the precedent of the non-protection given to the unborn and newborn.” [Francis Schaeffer quoted in James Kennedy *Lord of All*, page 105]

Allow me to share some not so subtle movements in that direction that are less than a month old. Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) from its beginning was promoted to relieve intense, incurable, pain. However, a study published on May 25, 2017 by the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* concerning PAS in Canada shows that “*a desire for personal autonomy rather than pain management is the main reason for PAS!*” This is very important! Dr. Al Mohler says it better than I can. He refers to this article in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and says that it “absolutely puts to the lie the argument that is being made by the mainstream proponents of assisted suicide... The proponents of assisted suicide have made their case arguing that it is morally necessary to allow persons to escape from unrelenting physical pain...that cannot otherwise be escaped. But now we know... that... is no longer the case.”

To repeat, this study showed that PAS is no longer driven by “unrelenting pain” but by loss of autonomy. In other words, they wanted to control their time and manner of death. This is a blatant denial of God being the author of life and the determiner of death. It is nothing less than man seeking to be god, to be sovereign over his own life.

Make no mistake about it; we now live in a culture of death where no longer does the majority believe that decisions of birth and death belong to God. What we have experienced since 1973 is a “mega shift” in world view. The area that we are dealing with today is just one of the many shifts in world view that we are seeing come to pass before our eyes.

II. Suicide

The sixth commandment is, “You shall not murder.” In some translations, that Hebrew word for “murder” is translated “kill.” *Murder* is the better translation. All murder is killing, but not all killing is murder. Here is a quote from a Hebrew lexicon: “This verb [refers to] an unlawful killing of a human being with malice aforethought, either expressed or implied...” [*The Complete Word Study Old Testament*, page 2367]

Make no mistake; suicide is a form of murder. It is “self-murder.”

A. The Big Question: Can a Person Who Commits Suicide Go to Heaven?

The answer to this question deserves much more than a flippant answer like, “Well of course, if they are saved” or “no true Christian would commit suicide, so the answer is “no.” I could take the rest of this message to just address this question, but I have a lot of other things that I want to cover. I know that some people commit suicide who are not thinking rationally and, to some extent, don’t even realize what they are doing. I believe, however, that represents a small portion of suicides.

There are three basic views among Protestants when it comes to the answer to this question:

1. A true Christian would never commit suicide, since God wouldn’t allow it.
2. A Christian may commit suicide, but would lose his salvation by doing so.
3. A Christian who commits suicide does not lose his salvation and would go to Heaven.

As we examine these three options, I will begin by ruling out the second option. True, biblical salvation is not something that can be lost. However, I hasten to say that, in my opinion, the overwhelming majority of people professing to be Christian are in truth not Christians – they are deceived. I base that on observing people in light of the tests for salvation in the book of 1 John. 1 John gives several tests that involve the pattern of a person’s life. If the pattern of a person’s life is sin without genuine confession and repentance, no love of God’s commands and a strong desire to obey them, agreeing the world’s values in words and actions, making a final break from other Christians and a final leaving of the church, and habitually hating another person or group, then no matter how adamant they are about being saved, they in reality are not saved. We are not saved by the pattern of our lives, but the pattern of our lives give evidence as to whether our salvation is real.

Of the remaining two options, I must choose the third one. The Bible indicates that a Christian can commit any sin with the exception of what is often called, “the unpardonable sin.” That unpardonable sin is addressed in Matthew 12:31-32 and Mark 3:25-32. This unpardonable sin is not something a Christian can commit. It is the final rejection of the Holy Spirit’s conviction that results in His withdrawal. If a lost person desires to be saved, but fears that they have committed the unpardonable sin, they have not committed this sin. Those who have committed this unpardonable sin have absolutely no desire to be saved, because it is the role of the Holy Spirit to open a lost person’s eyes and draw them to Jesus.

I would remind you that when God’s forgiveness is received, that forgiveness includes all sin – past present and future. Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV): “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

We read in John 10:27-29: “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will 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 the Father’s hand.”

Let me be clear that the suicide of a Christian is a serious matter. There are eternal consequences for the Christian who commits suicide in loss of reward in Heaven, but I do believe that it is possible for a Christian to believe the devil's lies and take his own life.

The devil's lie to those who contemplate suicide is, "There is no hope; everyone would be better off without me." We are to recognize his evil voice and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10 (NKJV): "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."

B. Thirteen Reasons Why Not to Choose Suicide

In light of the Netflix series, I want to focus on thirteen reasons why not! Each of these reasons deserves a whole message (some a series of messages), but today, I simply want you to see the big picture.

1. The Bible Teaches That Life Is Sacred

Suicide disregards the image of God that is in every human life. Genesis 1:26a-27: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them." Because of that image of God all life is sacred. No individual has the right to take that life away.

2. Your Body Does Not Belong to You

We opened this message by reading 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." No individual has the right to take what belongs to God. This truth affects many more areas than suicide, but it certainly applies to suicide.

3. Suicide Is Self-Centeredness in Its Worst Form

Suicide, in reality, is an extremely self-centered act. Suicide disregards the people who will be hurt the worst. In spite of the Devil's lies, there is hope in Christ.

4. Suicide Is Not Brave or Noble

The brave and noble ones are the ones who reject suicide and choose to look to a sovereign God to give His grace and power to bring them through. Suicide is a sin and no sin is brave and noble.

5. Suicide Is the Ultimate Rejection of God's Sovereignty

When we understand God's sovereignty we have no other choice than to see suicide as an act of rebellion against God and the rejection of His Lordship over our lives. God's sovereignty includes both that which He causes and that which He allows. Even the suffering that God allows is designed to conform us to the likeness of Christ. One of the greatest passages on the sovereignty of God is Romans 8:28-29a: "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..." That phrase "all things" includes painful things, disappointing things, and even sinful things. Suicide is the ultimate rejection of that sovereignty that can use "all things" to conform us to the likeness of Christ. There is never a single circumstance or consequence that is beyond our sovereign God's ability to work it together for good to those who love Him and belong to Him.

6. Suicide for Revenge Denies the Ultimate Justice of God

Certainly not all, but many suicides are carried out to “pay back” the person or persons who they perceive wronged them. According to the Scriptures, ultimate justice belongs to God. Romans 12:18-19 (NIV): “If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay.’”

7. Suicide Results in Permanent Scars on Loved Ones

No matter the implanted lies of the evil one which say loved ones will be better off without you, suicide causes deep emotional scars to those left behind. There is the scar of guilt (“maybe I could have done more”), the scar of rejection (especially on the part of the spouse and children of the one who committed suicide), and the scar of regret.

8. Suicide Is Not a Peaceful Death

Often when a troubled person commits suicide, others will say something along the line of “Well, they finally found peace.” Probably not! First, if they were not in Christ, they are immediately in a place of darkness and hopelessness. That is not peaceful! For believers, I’m not sure of the details, but to face the Lord who loves them and made provision for bringing them through their trials, there is the seeing of Him and realizing that we did not trust Him. Heaven will certainly be joyful for all who is there, but there is a time – even for believers – when we all will stand before the Judgment seat of Christ and our works will be judged for rewards. We see a description of that time in 1 Corinthians 3:11-15. 1 Corinthians 3:12-15 (NIV):

If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

Certainly for a non-believer, and in some ways for a believer, suicide is not a peaceful death.

9. Suicide Reveals a Deficient Fear of God

10. Suicide Never Leaves Anyone Better Off

11. Physical Death Is Not the End

12. Suicide Involves Man Seeking to Take God’s Place

Only God has the right to choose our time of death.

13. There Is a God Honoring Biblical Way to Die Today

Matthew 10:38-39: “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.”

Luke 9:23-24: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.” When each day we believe by faith what God says about our union with Christ, we reckon by faith that the old us has been crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20) and now we, having lost our life are free to walk in Christ’s resurrection life and resurrection power, to walk in victory over every trial, every painful thing that seems to have no solution, every rejection, and every difficult circumstance.

Conclusion

There is a way of escape in your seemingly hopeless situation. That way of escape is NOT in taking your own physical life. The God honoring way to deal with your seemingly hopeless

situation involves coming to Christ in repentance and faith and be placed in union with Him which results in a new identity, a new power, and a new life – Christ’s life which is eternal life. It may sound trite, but it’s true – there is victory in Jesus through every painful struggle here on this earth.