

Article of the Month
February, 2019

Suicide

The subject of suicide — taking one’s own life — meets with varying and often dramatic reactions among peoples of various religions and cultures. Suicide is becoming more and more prevalent in our time, and it needs a careful consideration since many of us will have friends, acquaintances, and relatives who choose to commit suicide.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

It doesn’t! That’s right! The Bible is silent on this matter. That, in itself, tells us a great deal. There is no condemnation, no shame, no punishment — NOTHING! So the very first thing a follower of Christ must do regarding this subject is to relieve himself of any preconceived beliefs regarding it. If we rely on the Bible, we cannot visit condemnation on those poor souls driven to this act. Nor can we make their survivors feel the weight of an unwarranted disapproval on our part.

It isn’t that Scripture doesn’t mention a few suicides. It does. But there is no comment on them. Additionally, in one sense, Adam committed suicide by disobedience. In another sense, Jesus committed suicide by sacrifice. They both forfeited their own lives. We may not normally consider this suicide, but in the strictest sense it is. Even in our society of today, we hear of people who commit “suicide by cop.” What that means, of course, is that the person wants to die, but instead of inflicting a deadly wound on himself, he provokes the police to do the job.

What we must then first accept is that the Lord does not heap defamation on those who commit suicide. Neither should we.

A LITTLE HISTORY

Despite the lack of Biblical reason to do so, zealous and misinformed Christians have, over the centuries, treated suicide victims with pathetic disdain. In some denominations, the clergy refuse to have funerals — or even burials — for those who have taken their own lives. In some extreme cases, a suicide victim has had a stake run through his chest and has been left to rot without burial. Some denominations consider the act a “mortal sin” — in other words, a sin for which there is no forgiveness. In their theology, this means that the poor soul gets to suffer the agonies of eternal torment — all because of one final brief decision in what was probably an agonizing life.

Return to 2019 Index

The point here is that Christians do not always consult the Holy Word for their actions and concepts.

WHY?

We cannot ask a person who has taken his life why he did it. It might be profitable for us, however, to muse on the possibilities. It is not likely that someone commits suicide to get even with some one! The most likely reason for the act is despair. And while most of us would not go to this extreme just because we are desperate, we should be able to enter into the struggle of someone who sees suicide as “the only way out.”

Suicides are increasing in number dramatically in our day. Frequently it is done by someone with what we call “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” — (PTSD). Members of the military, of law enforcement, of emergency medical teams, of fire-fighting departments, and countless others, have professions which have made them witness time after time things which no human should have to deal with. And, ultimately, some DON'T deal with it; they commit suicide.

Sometimes sympathetic doctors have helped hopeless patients by what they call “assisted suicide.” These doctors consider themselves as administering mercy for people whose prognoses are tortuous and fatal. Some statutes have even made the practice legal. Some sympathetic doctors who could not help their patients have also resorted to suicide — in despair because they could not watch their patients suffer so severely.

While we do not *promote* suicide, we should have the kind of human sympathies, mercies, and compassions that can at least understand it — and comfort those whose loved ones have committed it. In the mind of the suicide victim, his action was rational. Many suicide victims are people who are so sensitive in their natures that they simply cannot cope with what they see or what they experience. To them, their “way out” is actually most reasonable. They cannot stand to see others suffer, or they cannot carry the suffering which life has given them. We should admire their sensitivities, even if we cannot admire their solution.

THE END RESULT

We are all dying. There is no choice in that (at least at the moment). Some will die of old age, some of disease, some by accident — and some will CHOOSE the time and means of their demise. But we all die. The Lord intends to remedy that! There will be a resurrection of the dead. But meanwhile, we enter the unconsciousness of death awaiting the awakening and the resurrection to come. And it WILL come soon. Those who have died for any reason (even by their own hands) will awaken to a glorious new age in which despair, disease, depression, old age, crime, and all ills will be things of the past. Rejoice in that!

Return to 2019 Index

Suicide victims will be no less a part of the glories to come. And, perhaps, they will even be able to help us all to appreciate the sensitivities of their natures which led them to their fatal decisions. We all need greater sensitivities for our fellows. We are our brothers' keepers.
