

# Suicide: Gateway to Peace?



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Suicide or self-murder is rapidly increasing in our day. Over the last half of the 20th century the suicide rate for young men has tripled while during the same time more than twice the number of young women are by their own hands ending their lives. Suicide rates for those over 65 are also increasing.

Over 32,000 people in the United States commit self-murder every year.<sup>1</sup> Statistically that means that one person every 15 minutes kills himself; however, it is estimated that a suicide attempt is made every minute. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students. Twice as many females attempt to murder themselves as males, but four times as many males succeed. In over 30% of the cases where suicide is successful, drunkenness or alcoholism is a factor.

Hardly any community in our nation has not been affected in some way by suicide. Almost everyone knows someone: either a friend, a schoolmate, or a relative who has ended his own life. Often silence is the only response. Churches are failing to address this issue from the pulpit. The silence is deafening. It is my hope that the information shared in this booklet will assist some in their struggles with the temptation to end their own lives prematurely.

## **Basic Assumptions of the Self-Murderer**

There are certain assumptions a person must make about life and death before he will be willing to leave time and enter eternity as a self-murderer. What are those assumptions? Some of the primary ones are these:

- 1) Death is followed by a state of nothingness. We are here today and tomorrow we are not. Death is a state of non-existence. We did not exist before we were born and we cease to exist when we die. There are many in the world who hold this view of life and death.
- 2) Eternity and eternal punishment are not real. Whatever may or may not happen after death, if God does not exist, then neither does hell or judgment. If there is no judgment, then there are no consequences to our actions committed now on earth. The suicide may

think, "There may be consequences here for robbery or murder, but nobody can do anything to me if I am gone."

3) There is an afterlife, but most people go to the same blissful place and are at peace after they die. While most people may not completely reject the existence of an afterlife, certainly if there is life after death, all who were sincere and did good, will go to heaven. It is now common practice at funerals in most churches to elevate all who die to heaven. It seems that the only criterion the average citizen believes he needs to meet to enter heaven is that he be born. The most wicked mass murderer generally has those who defend him by saying they "are shocked something like this could happen." The assumption being that he was basically a good person and it was out of character for him to do anything so wrong. We will deal later in this booklet with how the Bible answers each of these assumptions.

Isaac Watts in his treatise *A Defence Against the Temptation to Self-Murder* was right when he said, "When an atheist is tempted to destroy himself, he has no concern whether it be lawful or no(t), for he knows of no law nor power that can reach to punish him. Such a wretch doth not believe there is any other world to receive him when he dies out of this, nor any God there to call him to account. He supposes his soul vanishes into air, and his dust is safe from vengeance. These are the sentiments of atheism; and vile and irrational as they are, yet they are the only principles that can give any tolerable colour or pretence for self-murder."<sup>2</sup> In these words Watts has summarized one of the primary reasons that suicide is now so common. The general belief that there is no God or at least that we will not have to account for our sins after we die to any higher power has caused suicide rates to soar in our generation.

### **Why Do People Commit Suicide?**

The reasons people commit suicide cannot all be listed for they are many and varied; however, they may be summarized in several general groups.

The first group of persons is motivated by the fear of shame and disgrace in the world. When people have committed sin for which they might conceivably be publicly shamed before men, they often think the best way out is self-murder. Their sin might involve criminal behavior, sexual immorality, or the loss of reputation and honor among men. But are these things really worse than the risk of sinning against God in the wickedest manner by taking one's own life? It is folly of the highest magnitude to think that by the act of self-murder one can escape disgrace in the world. The self-murderer brings upon himself the greatest contempt and disgrace one could have as long as his name is mentioned among men. "What is there (that) casts a greater blot upon the name of any man, so long as his memory lives in the world, than to say, he hanged or drowned, he poisoned or stabbed himself? This is a stain (that) shall never be wiped away: And when thou risest out of thy grave, at the last day, thou shalt arise to everlasting shame and contempt. Besides all thy other sins, this shall be published before angels and men, that thou wert guilty of the most unnatural wickedness in the world. What a senseless practice is it for men to bring upon them-selves eternal shame and confusion only for this end, that they may escape what is temporal?"<sup>3</sup>

The second group tempted to self-murder include those who have had their expectations in the world dashed through difficult circumstances. Perhaps they have through a foolish use of their money, lost much or all of it; or perhaps they have lost their estate and are faced with a life of poverty. Such is the pride of men's spirits that they refuse to submit to the providence of God here on earth, "Man's goings are of the Lord; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Proverbs 20:24). And for the desire not to undergo a few days of difficulty, they would rather risk having the everlasting wrath of God poured upon them to all eternity.

The third group of self-murderers to be looked at are those who throw their lives away due to brokenheartedness over the loss of a sweetheart or a husband or wife who has left

them for another lover. Their heart is broken and the world seems empty and too painful to continue to live in. Yet King Solomon, one of the wisest men that ever lived, long ago wrote of the vanity of the world, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity, and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14). Have there not been many who have gone before you and many who now live who have felt betrayed by the closest of friends? Are you now resolved to die because you have been disappointed by the fickleness of another? Will not time and patience heal the hurt you now feel so deeply?

A fourth group of self-murderers consists of those who anticipate a lingering death filled with much pain and torment of the body and instead of enduring this pain they decide to end their lives immediately rather than to prolong their own suffering. The highest suicide rates in the United States are statistically found in those over 50 years old. In more than 50% of those deaths "medical illness plays an important role in the motivation to commit suicide."<sup>4</sup> Modern medicine can keep people alive much longer today than in past times and many who have no hope of getting completely well would rather cut their lives short by their own hand than to wait for God's appointed time.

Consider the patience of Job. He had lost his wealth, all his children, the support of his wife, was afflicted with the sorest of boils from head to foot, rejected by his peers, and falsely blamed for his own sufferings by his so-called friends. Yet he endured with patience his sufferings and was released from them in God's timing. Daniel, as an old man, was thrown to the lions rather than compromise his principles and was miraculously rescued by God (Daniel 6). The martyrs of the early church endured great sufferings and tortuous deaths without giving up their faith. "And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Hebrews 11:36-37).

### **What Does the Bible Say About Suicide?**

The Bible has much to say about life and death and also the meaning of life. The Bible is written from the perspective that the existence of God is real, so I will not deal with that question here. Even if you may not fully accept that God really does exist, I urge you to keep reading.

In the Bible, God claims for Himself authority, power, and Lordship over life and death. God tells us in Deuteronomy 32:39: "I kill and make alive." Since God is the Creator of all, it is He who determines whether a person shall live and when a person shall die. Does God not have that right? We did not determine when we should be born and we do not have the right to determine when we shall leave this life. Ecclesiastes 3:1-2 tells us: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. A time to be born, and a time to die."

Isaac Watts illustrates the folly of thinking we can end our lives at our own pleasure whenever we think it proper without any consequences: "Can a soldier who is fixed in his post, though it rain and blow at midnight, forsake his guard before his General permits (him to)? Can such a faithless sentinel expect anything but frowns and death from his General? Is it excuse enough to say, 'I broke the orders of my superior because it rained?' What a piece of shameful cowardice is this? And dares a soul that is placed by its Creator to act in a human body dismiss itself, and fly from its appointed station, as far as the distance of two worlds, and yet hope for approbation? Dares such a soul run from its post, into the immediate presence of its sovereign Lord, in the world of spirits, and say, 'I have fled from my post because I found it troublesome, I have done it indeed without leave, and yet I expect a reward'? May not such a wretch rather justly expect to be banished for ever from the presence of his Maker, and be doomed to suffer eternal penalties without mercy and without hope?"<sup>5</sup>

When Moses received the Ten Commandments from God on Mount Sinai included in that holy law was the command, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13). I would ask you—Is not self-murder a violation of the command not to murder? If you think that this commandment applies only to others and not to yourself and that you have the right to take away your own life, but not your neighbor’s, then you are greatly stretching the meaning of this commandment. Other commandments deal clearly with yourself as well as others. The seventh commandment says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). Does that mean that *you* have the right to commit adultery with your own body, but *others* do not? The foolishness of such a position is apparent to anyone who truly wants to be objective.

There are many other prohibitions against murder in the Bible. One of the first was given to Noah after the great flood when only eight people remained alive on the earth: “Whosoever sheds man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man” (Genesis 9:6). Because God created man in His own image, if a man is slain, God has declared that the person responsible shall be put to death. It is not my purpose to debate the death penalty in this booklet, but to show you clearly what God says about self-murder and its penalty. Since God has appointed that men should execute other men who commit murder in this world, do you think that God will not execute just vengeance upon a self-murderer in the next world? Does God expect *men* to inflict *greater* punishment now on lawbreakers, than *He* is willing to inflict upon them later?

In Revelation 22 we are told of some of those who are outside of the heavenly city, “For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whore-mongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie” (Revelation 22:15). Here it is clearly stated that unrepentant murderers are outside of heaven. Nor is it meant here that they are casual observers who line the gates of heaven partaking of some of its glories, but not all. No. The Bible also makes it clear that murderers go to their own place. “But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). The lake of fire and brimstone is also called hell. It is very important that we ask ourselves the question “What is hell like?” Elsewhere I have described hell in this way: “Hell is a furnace of unquenchable fire, a place of everlasting punishment, where its victims are tormented in both their bodies and their minds in accordance with their sinful natures, their actual sins committed, and the amount of spiritual light given to them, which they rejected. Hell is a place from which God’s wrath is revealed as a terrifying, consuming fire, and men live with unfulfilled lusts and desires in torment forever and ever.”<sup>6</sup>

The Bible uses a great variety of words to describe hell, hinting to us that no human description could ever suffice. Hell is described as *a lake of fire burning with brimstone* (Revelation 19:20); *a furnace of fire* where there *shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth* (Matthew 13:42); *a place of torment* (Luke 16:28); *eternal fire* (Jude 7); a place where there is *blackness of darkness forever* (Jude 13); *outer darkness* (Matthew 22:13); a *prison* (I Peter 3:19) from which no one shall ever be released; a *bottomless pit* (Revelation 9:1), showing that none shall any ever escape by their own ingenuity; a place of *fire unquenchable* (Luke 3:17); *Tophet*, a place where idolaters burned their own children to death as human sacrifices (Isaiah 30:33); and a place of *everlasting punishment* (Matthew 25:46).

You are weary of your lives here and will you go to hell to ease your pain? How immediate would be your desire to return to your present situation from the torments of hell! Then you would be glad to endure the pain you now feel for 1000 years or longer! If you saw the fires of hell gaping before you, would you leap into it? Is not a little more time here on earth which you could use to seek repentance and the salvation of your soul of infinite value no matter what your physical condition is now?

But you may say, I do not know for sure whether these things you say about hell and life after death are true. Are you really willing to take that risk? What if there were only a 50-50 chance you would be tormented for an endless eternity in fierce, unquenchable fire if you are wrong? Would you be anxious to take that risk? If what the Bible says about hell is true, why would you do anything that would be almost certain to cast you immediately into a state of everlasting, unbearable torment? What foolishness is this?

But you say, I am convinced there is no hell and that even if there is, that I would not go there. I answer, a person may be quite convinced of something that has no basis in fact at all. Learned men of the past were convinced that the world was flat, when the Bible clearly refers to the “circle of the earth” (Isaiah 40:22). The owners of the Titanic were completely convinced that it could not sink, but their being convinced did not stop it from happening, with great loss of life. You may be completely convinced that you are not going to hell or even that hell does not exist and still find yourself there moments after you kill yourself and then it will be eternally too late to escape from the wrath of God.

I John 3:15 also warns us that self-murderers go to hell. The Apostle John wrote: “Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” Referring to the way true Christians live Paul wrote: “For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself” (Romans 14:7). And in Matthew 10:28 the Lord Jesus Christ says we are to “fear him (referring to God) which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” Do you fear God? He is able to cast your body and soul into hell! Does that concern you at all as you contemplate self-murder? It should be the greatest concern you have, in the light of which, all earthly troubles should seem as flee-bites!

### **Examples of Suicide in the Bible**

There are several examples of suicide in the Bible. It would be good to consider them. The most well-known self-murderer in the Bible is Judas Iscariot, disciple and betrayer of Jesus Christ. When Judas saw that Christ was going to be put to death he felt the terrors of his conscience besieging him for having betrayed an innocent man. But in his distress he does not turn to God, but away from Him, and decides it is better to die than to live with the shame and guilt of his crime. His distress ended in his hanging himself. The Scripture says, “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. Saying, ‘I have sinned against innocent blood.’ And they said, ‘What is that to us? See thou to that.’ And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:3-5). Did his act of self-murder do anything to alleviate his guilt or shame before the world? No. His name is still one of the most infamous in history almost 2000 years later. Do you think it a wise choice to die as Judas did?

Ahithophel was a counselor to King David. When David’s government was overthrown at the hand of his son Absalom, Ahithophel aligned himself with Absalom. At first Absalom followed Ahithophel’s advice, but when Absalom refused to follow his counsel to overtake David while he was fleeing Jerusalem and kill him, Ahithophel’s pride was wounded, he felt publicly shamed among Absalom’s advisors, and possibly fearing retaliation if David regained the throne, Ahithophel went home, set his house in order, and killed himself (II Samuel 17:23).

Ahithophel was too proud to have another’s advice taken instead of his own. His pride could not bear such shame. To him death was a better alternative than the shame of someone else receiving honor and preferment before himself. Thus in his last act he fulfills the meaning of his name, *Ahithophel*, which means, *the brother of a fool*. Matthew Henry commenting on this says, “Nothing indicates so much folly as self-murder.”<sup>7</sup>

Another example of self-murder in the Bible is that of King Saul, first king of Israel. Saul had abandoned God and was trying to murder David, thinking that was the only way

that he could hold on to his throne. Finally, abandoned by God and left to his own foolish reason, Saul went to seek supernatural assistance from a witch. The following day in battle, Saul was wounded and rather than giving his enemies a chance to shame him, he seeks that his armour bearer might end his life, but unable to convince him to do it, Saul fell on his own sword (I Samuel 31:3-4). Matthew Henry speaking of Saul's death says, "He became his own executioner, thinking hereby to avoid shame, but running upon a heinous sin, and with it entailing upon his own name a mark of perpetual infamy, as *felo de se*—a self-murderer...Saul died as a fool dieth, as a coward dieth—a proud fool, a sneaking coward; he died as a man that had neither the fear of God nor hope in God."<sup>8</sup>

Other Biblical examples of self-murder are equally as foolish. Abimelech, afraid of the shame it might bring him if it became known that he received his death blow at the hand of a woman, asks his armour bearer to end his life (Judges 9:54). The Scripture also records the death of Zimri, who reigned as king only 7 days: "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, for his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the Lord" (I Kings 16:18-19). Thus Zimri passed out of this world in a blaze of fire only to enter the next life as a fire-brand in hell. Isaac Watts puts these Biblical examples in perspective when he writes, "Consider what sort of men they have been who are recorded in Scripture as self-murderers: Ahithophel, a false traitor, who counselled Absalom to rebel against his father David; Saul, a bloody man, who forsook God and was forsaken of God; Zimri, a most wicked king of Israel; and Judas who betrayed our blessed Saviour."<sup>9</sup> Are these the types of persons you wish to follow after as your examples and models? Do you wish the infamy that followed them to follow you after death? Do you wish to join them in hell? Wise King Solomon calls out to you, "Do not be excessively wicked. Why should you die before your time?" (Ecclesiastes 7:17).

### **Natural Arguments Against Self-Murder**

Suicide is one of the most selfish, cowardly, and irresponsible acts that a person can commit. With the possible exception of extreme distraction or mental illness, only a person completely consumed with selfishness and living to please themselves would voluntarily end their own life. Suicide is not the act of someone who hates themselves, but who loves themselves inordinately and cannot bear to see themselves in pain, shamed, dishonored, or rejected because of the enormity of their pride and the emmenseness of their self-love. The self-murderer is dominated by thoughts about himself and gives little thought or consideration to the feelings of others.

Suicide is a cowardly act. Isaac Watts has said that self-murder is "cowardice mingled with extreme folly."<sup>10</sup> Rather than honor God's sovereignty and endure the circumstances which God has placed him in for a period of time, he murders himself. Rather than exercise patience of spirit and perseverance through difficulty, he is impatient and ends his life by his own hand. "Says the self-murderer, 'I will not endure this trial; I will rid myself of this hardship; I will bear it no longer; I have no patience, nor will I submit to this method of divine probation; I will hasten my appearance before the judgment seat; there let my Judge determine my final estate according to the days of my past life and past trials, for I will not suffer my state of probation to be prolonged any farther.' How is it possible now that such a rebellious creature can ever expect favour or absolution at the hands of God his judge?"<sup>11</sup>

Suicide is an irresponsible act. The self-murderer leaves a family and friends behind. It is not an isolated act committed in a vacuum. It brings humiliation and disgrace to those family members who remain. It brings deep anguish and pain of spirit to friends and relatives. What torment is there to those who lose a father, mother, brother, sister, son, or daughter in such a sudden and disgraceful way? Such a loss will haunt them for the rest of

their lives unlike any other manner of death. Do you wish to bring such hurt and torment upon those you love the most? Do you wish for them to live in shame the rest of their lives? This very consideration alone should put a stop to any suicidal thoughts you may have.

Your reputation among men will be utterly destroyed. If you are afraid of the shame you will have if you continue alive, consider: your name shall be clothed with shame as long as it is remembered among men, if you kill yourself. In older times both the church and the state treated self-murderers in a far different way than is now done. They were denied Christian burial and were viewed by the church in the same way as an excommunicated person was. The church of bygone days had no hope that self-murderers were true Christians.

Isaac Watts tells of how the civil government dealt with self-murderers in his day, “The civil government did heretofore appoint that they should be put into the earth with utmost contempt; and this was generally done in some public crossway, that the shame and infamy might be made known to every passenger; and that this infamy might be lasting, they were ordained to have a stake driven through their dead bodies, which was not to be removed...English law calls a self-murderer *Felo de se*, or a felon to himself, and upon this account the estate and effects of the deceased are forfeited by law, and cannot descend to the relatives, unless it appear that the person who laid violent hands upon himself was distracted...Were such a person sure that his estate would be forfeited, and his effects carried away from his wife, children and family; were he sure that his dead body should be publicly exposed, buried in the highway, and with a stake driven through it as a mark of huge infamy, perhaps he would give way to calmer counsels, and be content to bear a little shame, or pain, or loss, till God saw fit to put an end to all his sufferings by natural means.”<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, by committing suicide you are leaving a very bad example for others who will observe you and be tempted to repeat your crime themselves. When King Saul fell upon his own sword, his armour bearer immediately followed him in doing the same thing. “And when his armour bearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword and died with him” (I Samuel 31:5). Who that has witnessed the copycat mass shootings we have seen in recent years can doubt but such an effect is not only possible, but probable? Do you wish to be held accountable before God not only for your own destruction, but also partially responsible for the destruction of others whom you may influence to imitate your foolish act of self-murder?

It is therefore an evil thing to speak well of any self-murderer. New England pastor Increase Mather in a sermon published in 1723 warned strongly against this practice: “To exalt the persons of self-murderers to heaven is an evil and a dangerous practice. We should rather leave secret things to God, and to the discoveries of the great day. Indeed if a man’s life and conversation were as becomes the gospel, we are not positively and absolutely to say that he is damned, though he killed himself; because we know not but that he might be at that time under the power of distraction...Yet, on the other hand, if there were no sign of distraction appearing in persons before they went to destroy themselves, nor any evidence of repentance after such attempts, we should not say such persons are gone to heaven, lest, by being over-charitable to the dead, we become cruel to the living. The asserting that such persons are saved, may occasion and encourage others to do the like, and the everlasting destruction of bodies and souls follow upon it.”<sup>13</sup>

## **Biblical Arguments Against Self-Murder**

We now come to examine what some of the Biblical arguments are against self-murder. First, the self-murderer places himself in a situation where repentance, which is necessary to eternal life, is impossible. The Lord Jesus repeatedly warned his hearers that unless they repented of their sins they would perish eternally in hell, “Except ye repent, ye shall all

likewise perish” (Luke 13:5). Increase Mather wrote: “It may be said, I will repent and pray for the pardon of my sin, before I do it. I answer: What a delusion of Satan! I have read indeed of a philosopher, who called upon his gods and so threw himself into the fire to his own destruction. But canst thou think, that God will hear such prayers? No,—*Psalm 66:18, If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.* If thou comest before God with bloody resolutions in thy heart, God will not accept of thy prayers. He says, *Isaiah 1:15, When you make many prayers, I will not hear, your hands are full of blood.* Nor can this be called repentance: For a man to confess a sin, and be resolved still upon the commission of it! No, tis he who confesseth and forsaketh, that shall find mercy.”<sup>14</sup>

Repentance from sin is a doctrine that is little understood today. A. W. Pink said, “Repentance is a supernatural and inward revelation from God, giving a deep consciousness of what I am in *His* sight, which causes me to loathe and condemn myself, resulting in a bitter sorrow for sin, a holy horror and hatred for sin, and a turning away from or forsaking of sin. It is the discovery of God’s high and righteous claims upon me, and of my lifelong failure to meet those claims. It is the recognition of the holiness and goodness of his law, and my defiant insubordination thereto. It is the perception that God has the right to rule and govern me, and of my refusal to submit to Him.”<sup>15</sup>

Repentance flows out of the sovereign work of God in changing the heart of the sinner. This change causes the sinner to despise himself for his own corruption and depravity, to hate sin because it is evil and an affront to God, and a violation of God’s holy law. The one who truly repents loves the holiness of God and the strictness of His law, willingly and lovingly embraces Christ as Lord of all his life, and follows Him in obedience all his days. The repentant sinner no longer wishes to run his own life, but submits his mind and will to the authority of God over his life and to the sovereignty of God over his circumstances. Thomas Goodwin, a well-respected Puritan pastor, wrote: “Resolve either to leave every known sin and submit to every known duty, or else never look to find mercy and favour with God.”<sup>16</sup>

Second, the self-murderer demonstrates a complete lack of faith in God. The Bible teaches that “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). Tell me what type of faith it is that will not trust God with the ordering of your circumstances? What type of faith is it that will not let God determine whether you shall live or die? How can you say you belong to God or speak as the Lord Jesus did, “Thy will be done,” when you will not so much as let Him determine which world you shall live in—this one or the next? The Apostle James says, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (James 2:17). The self-murderer demonstrates a complete lack of faith and trust in God. He is not willing for God to order his life as He has determined. He is not willing for God to exercise His will on the most basic matter of life—when he shall die. It is God who says, “I kill, and I make alive” (Deuteronomy 32:59). Do not claim to be a person with faith if you can knowingly and willingly with premeditation snuff out your own life like a candle. Do not mislead yourself so greatly!

Third, nearly all self-murderers catapult themselves into everlasting torment in hell as soon as their life expires. Peter warns that men must give an account to God who is the One who will judge the living and the dead (1 Peter 4:5). Suicide is not a gateway to peace, but a gateway to an eternal hell to almost all who are successful perpetrators of it. I have already briefly described hell to you. One aspect of hell which I did not emphasize previously was its eternal nature. Hell lasts forever! There are no vacations in hell! God created men as eternal beings destined to live forever. The eternal duration of hell is perhaps its most terrifying aspect.

Jonathan Edwards, one of America’s greatest religious leaders, wrote this about the eternity of hell: “Consider what it is to suffer extreme torment for ever and ever; to suffer it day and night, from one year to another, from one age to another, and from one thousand ages to another, and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands, in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth; with your souls full of



dreadful grief and amazement, with your bodies and every member full of racking torture, without any possibility of getting ease; without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries; without any possibility of hiding yourselves from him; without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain; without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better...without rest day and night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered; after you shall have worn a thousand more such ages, you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are not one whit nearer to the end of your torments; but that still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries, incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend up for ever and ever.”<sup>17</sup> Does that sound like the peace you are searching for? Do you think it a wise bargain to exchange your current situation for that?

One of the most important reasons for not ending your life now deals with your relationship to God. While you continue to live, there is the possibility that you may seek God and find Him. At death that possibility is taken from you forever. There are no second chances after death. The words of the prophets in the Bible cry out to you to seek the Lord while he may be found. To call upon Him while He is near. To forsake your actions of sin and to cease thinking about what is evil and selfish and to turn to God (Isaiah 55:6-7). Jesus Christ urged His hearers to “Strive to enter in at the straight gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24). Seek God with all your might. Seek Him for that change of heart necessary to eternal life. Unless your corrupt heart is changed by the power of God, you will remain in an unconverted state until you die and then face the judgment of God.

Eternal life is found only in Jesus Christ. Christ claimed to be the only way by which man could be freed from sin and selfishness and come rightly to God: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). It is of utmost importance for you to come to Jesus Christ and seek eternal life in Him before it is too late. The soul that is fully set upon doing God's will, will not be consumed by pride, self-love, and self-gratification and therefore less tempted by selfish motives to end their own lives.

### **Advice to the Tempted**

What then can you do to strengthen yourself against the temptations which come upon you to commit self-murder? What steps can you take to reduce the possibility that you might end your life by your own hand? I will suggest to you nine remedies which, if followed, may assist you in this struggle:

1. Keep the fear of God before you at all times. Let the terrors of the Almighty keep you far from any thoughts of self-murder. The condition you may find yourself in immediately after you kill yourself will be far worse than your present circumstances. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10).

2. Try to keep yourself busy. It has been said that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. Be always occupied doing something, even if it is merely an amusement of some sort. Take up a hobby. Get involved in playing sports. A body and mind engaged in activities will have less time for idleness.

3. Avoid being alone too much. Seek out other people to be with, especially if you are depressed and melancholy.

4. Avoid places, situations, and things which might increase the temptation upon you. Stay away from bodies of water, cliffs, and other dangerous places. Keep all firearms out of your sight and reach. If you live in a home that has a gun in it, make sure that it is always locked up. Remove everything as far as possible from you that might be a means of self-destruction.

5. If you suffer from chronic depression, seek the advice of a qualified physician to help you treat it. Perhaps you have a chemical imbalance which is contributing to your condition. Over 60% of all suicides are carried out by people with chronic depression.

6. Avoid the daily consumption of alcohol or mind-altering drugs. Do not seek to drown your sorrows in a bar. A person is much more inclined to act foolishly when they are drunk or drugged. Alcohol is a factor in over 30% of all completed suicides.

7. Reveal your temptations and struggles to a Christian minister or to a faithful and wise Christian friend. Ask them to pray with and for you about your temptations toward self-destruction. This may go a long way to aid in breaking the force of your temptations.

8. Memorize specific Bible verses to help you to resist the temptations of the devil. James 4:7, "Submit yourselves therefore to God: resist the devil, and he will flee from you." I John 3:15, "Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." Colossians 3:2, "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Revelation 21:8, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

9. Lastly, pray against pride, self-confidence, an inordinate love of the world, and feelings of despair. Isaac Watts warns: "Love not anything in this world so much, as that the loss of it should throw

you quite off your guard, and make you abandon yourself to wild and extravagant methods of relief. Let your affections be so subdued, and kept in so good order, that the common calamities of life may not utterly confound, though they may surprise you."<sup>18</sup>

When the Apostle Paul was imprisoned in Philippi an earthquake occurred, all the jail cell doors were opened, and the prisoners' irons were loosened. The jailor being awakened from his sleep and fearing he would be executed if some of his prisoners had already escaped, drew out his sword to kill himself. Paul responded immediately to him: "Do thyself no harm" (Acts 16:28). Words filled with wisdom. Words which bear repeating now. I plead with you in God's name: "Do thyself no harm!"

1 Factual information about suicide in the first two paragraphs was obtained from The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention web site: <http://www.afsp.org>

2 Isaac Watts, A Defence Against the Temptation to Self-Murder from The Works of Isaac Watts, Volume 2, (Publisher unknown, Date of publication unknown) p. 465.

3 Ibid, p. 478-479.

4 The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention web site: <http://www.afsp.org>

5 Watts, p. 466.

6 William C. Nichols, The Narrow Way, (Ames, Iowa: International Outreach, Inc., 1993), pp. 24-25.

7 Matthew Henry, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Volume 2, (McLean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Company, nd), p. 535.

8 Ibid, p. 444.

9 Watts, p. 469.

10 Ibid, p. 466.

11 Ibid, p. 474.

12 Ibid, p. 476 & 477.

13 Dr. Increase Mather, A Sermon on the Horrid Crime of Self-Murder, (Boston: B. Green, 1723), p. 14-15.

14 Ibid, p. 13-14.

15 Arthur W. Pink, The Doctrine of Salvation, (Ann Arbor, MI: Baker Book House Company, 1975), p. 58.

16 Thomas Goodwin, quoted by Arthur W. Pink in The Doctrine of Salvation, p. 60.

17 Jonathan Edwards, The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 2, (Edinburgh: Banner of truth, 1974), p. 88.

18 Watts, p. 484.

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