



GUIDELINES DAILY COMMENTARY ON LIVING WITH DR. HAROLD J. SALA

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Subject: Suicide

AFTER A SUICIDE

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 2 Corinthians 5:21

"Dear Dr. Sala," writes a friend of Guidelines, "as I was driving to work today, I managed to catch your commentary that really gave me some insight on the subject of suicide, as my youngest brother, age 21, took his own life last Wednesday. Our family is still struggling with this, of course, but with our strong faith in Jesus we are getting through this difficult time. What is uppermost on our minds is whether a true Christian could have committed such an act; and whether that sin could be forgiven if the person didn't have time to ask for forgiveness and repent."

What does the Bible say? This is an issue of tremendous importance. Some, like our friend who wrote that sad letter, look at the issue in retrospect. They are trying to find hope that they will meet a loved one who has taken his or her life in heaven. Others are looking at the issue in the perspective of what's happening today as suicide rates continue to escalate.

In answering that question, I have to acknowledge that the Bible clearly says the taking of a life, which is murder--whether it is your life or the life of another person--is wrong. It is sin. I must also say that the Bible says clearly, "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). That's good news. Paul also says, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). At Calvary, the price was paid for all our sins--past, present, and future.

All right, we agree that God does forgive sins that are confessed and forsaken; but a person who takes his or her own life in suicide doesn't have the chance to ask for forgiveness. What then?

The New Testament says that when a person places his or her faith in Jesus Christ, he or she becomes a new person, a child who is adopted into the family of God. Galatians 4:6-7 explain "...Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, God then an heir through God."

The New Testament also says clearly that we who are God's children will someday be judged on the basis of our faithfulness to the Lord. This is called in Scripture, the "judgment seat of Christ." Paul again says, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

None of us is perfect, though we should be striving to be Christ-like in all that we say and do. If entrance to heaven were based on our performance, none of us would get through the pearly gates. In writing to Titus, Paul says, "He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5).

Thank God that His grace is freely and undeservedly given to all His children, not simply those who pray a prayer of confession just before they close their eyes in death. God is able to meet us at the point of every need so you can trust Him today.

Resource reading: Titus 3:1-8