

**Teaching Series:** Saved for Eternity

**Title:** Session 15 - Suicide

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## **Chapter 2: Objections against Eternal Salvation**

### **Suicide**

Many Christians have wondered at least once in their lives: Is suicide an unpardonable sin? Do believers who commit suicide lose their salvation and go straight to hell? Most people, even believers, answer “yes” to this question because suicide leaves no room for repentance; a person enters eternity with unconfessed and, therefore, unforgiven sin. Such a conclusion is based on the assumption that believers’ sins are forgiven in time, depending on their confession of, and that their salvation fluctuates and is not final until they die with all their sins confessed. However, the Bible teaches all sins—past, present, and future—are forgiven and erased through faith in the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One’s eternal destiny is sealed and set at the time of justifying faith, it has already, and forever, been determined at the time of salvation. Moreover, numerous instances of sudden death may bring Christians into eternity before they have the opportunity to confess and repent. As theologian Robert N. Wennberg puts it, “What about the heart-attack victim who dies while brutalizing his wife or amid an adulterous liaison? Does his failure to repent in this life forever remove the possibility of forgiveness in the next? And must we not pass from this life with unconfessed and unrepented sin lest we never find forgiveness and reconciliation with God in the next?” Common sense reveals that many, if not most of us, will die with sins we have not asked for forgiveness of. Repentance itself does not seal us into the Heavenly Kingdom—the Holy Spirit is such a seal (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30). For a more in-depth study about future sins and confession of sins, I recommend reading another book, written by me, entitled *The Glory of Righteousness*.

People’s perspective on suicide and salvation is probably also significantly influenced by the mortal sin position found in the Roman Catholic Church, which views suicide as a lethal sin, maintaining a distinction between unpardonable and pardonable sins. The former separate a person from God’s grace, while the latter, equally serious, do not. Mortal sin is considered a severe offense that merits eternal damnation if not repented and forgiven before death. This creates a system of major or minor offenses within Catholicism. It also creates a framework where living in a state of grace is like a moving target for the believer, like a daily struggle to stay in God’s good graces. Complete and total forgiveness is conditional and requires strict repentance. The Roman Catholic position affirms that taking your own life deliberately and without remorse incurs eternal damnation.

Is suicide considered a sin in the Bible? The most basic definition of suicide is that a person

intends to die or acts on the desire to die. This person pursues a course of action for the express purpose of ending their life. In this definition, suicide is a sin because it is murder and comes against one of the Ten Commandments: “You shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). Although we don’t instinctively think of murder in this way, unlawfully taking one’s own life does not differ morally from taking another’s. However, we should also keep the following important aspects in mind. Suicide is mentioned only six times in the whole Bible. In none of these cases is an explicit moral evaluation or judgment rendered as to whether it is right or wrong: the case of Abimelech in Judges 9:50–57; Samson in Judges 16:28–30 (although some are not convinced this is suicide in the strict sense of the term); King Saul and his armor-bearer in 1 Samuel 31:1–6 (2 Sam. 1:1–15; 1 Chronicles 10:1–13); Ahithophel in 2 Samuel 17:23; Zimri in 1 Kings 16:18–19; and Judas Iscariot in Matthew 27:5.

There are also cases of apparent suicide, that are morally permissible. For example, the soldier who fights the enemy in a time of war, knowing he most likely will die, is not guilty of committing suicide. As Wennberg puts it, he is not choosing this act as a means to his death “but rather is accepting a foreseen, yet unwelcome, consequence of what he is doing.” In a sense, then, the soldier is engaging in a suicidal act but is not committing suicide. What about the case of a soldier who falls on a live grenade to save his friend’s life, or when a destitute mother stops eating what little food remains so her child may live? What about a Christian in the third century who was given a choice: either deny Jesus or be thrown to the lions? By refusing to give up on Jesus publicly, the believer chose a course of action he knew would result in his death (even though it was not his conscious intent to die), but that would not be considered suicide because the death he chose was an unintended side effect of his fidelity to Christ. What about Jesus, the Messiah, Who willingly fully chose to allow Himself to be killed? Can He be accused of taking His own life? Of course not!

Is suicide a sin? Yes, in many instances, this is a serious sin that violates God’s expressed will concerning the sanctity of life. However, even in this case, there is no evidence in the Bible to conclude that it is beyond the reach of the forgiveness obtained for us at the cross of Christ. In other words, suicide is not an unpardonable sin or one that forfeits someone’s eternal salvation. Family and friends of a believer who has committed suicide should never worry about whether their loved one is still saved. Finally, Romans 8:38–39 says nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, not even death:

**Romans 8:38–39 (NKJV)**

<sup>38</sup> *For I am persuaded that **neither death nor life**, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,*

<sup>39</sup> *nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

## Conclusion

The teaching about the eternal security of believers in Christ usually generates two types of responses and places people in two categories based on them. The first consists of people who become offended and angry with this teaching. These are the religious and self-righteous ones who behave like the older son from the parable of the prodigal son, not knowing the love of the Father. Although they might be born again as well, their image of God is more of a One Who is harsh and judging than a loving Father, and because of that perspective, they treat other fellow believers in the same way they perceive divinity. They become harsh critics or pride themselves on the good deeds they do. They think God loves people and bears with their sins only until they become born again, but after that, they are supposed to be perfectly holy in their actions. Otherwise, He will punish them or cancel their salvation if they indulge too much in sinful behaviors. So, these Christians rely more on their good works of holiness to remain saved than on Jesus's righteousness by faith. If you are one of those people who felt irritated while reading this book, I would lovingly encourage you to take time to examine yourself and your motivations and see if you are really in the right faith (1 Corinthians 13:5–6). Examine yourself carefully and make sure your trust for salvation was indeed placed on Jesus Christ's sacrifice and not on your morality or holy deeds, to avoid unpleasant eternal surprises when you will stand face to face with God.

The second category of people is usually filled with joy, gratefulness, and encouragement to live for God, even more, when they find out that maintaining salvation is not dependent on their works but on God, who sustains them and causes them to persevere in faith until the end. They are the ones who will stand in awe of the unique gift of salvation, received and maintained by faith alone, independent of their works. They are the ones who cannot brag about their deeds and cannot become proud because they know those deeds are not gaining them anything from what they already received from God. They will be more compassionate and graceful with others. I was one of those people who cried for joy for a whole week when the Holy Spirit revealed to me that I was justified forever, even if I still had sinful behaviors in my life. I felt like a great weight I had carried for years as a Christian had been lifted from my shoulders. If you experienced this too, I rejoice in the Holy Spirit! This book was written for you, and I hope it will bring you the same kind of freedom and joy I have experienced ever since. May the Lord bless you and continue to establish you in His righteousness and help you take the message of this book with love to other believers in Christ as well!