

A Christian View of “Suicide”

Suicide: “The act of taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally. Though the word “suicide” does not appear in most Bible translations (see, however, Jn 8:22, NLT), the OT records suicides by Saul and his armor bearer (1 Sm 31:3–6), Ahitophel (2 Sm 17:23), and Zimri (1 Kgs 16:15–19). Judas Iscariot is the only suicide victim mentioned in the NT (Mt 27:3–5).

The Bible does not directly condemn suicide but rather treats it as an indication of moral failure, often intensified by guilt or great personal loss. Saul had lost his sanity, his stability, and then his three sons on the battlefield. So he ended his life. Ahitophel, once a trusted counselor, was ruined by his ambition. When his plot against David was refused by Absalom, he felt disgraced. So he went home, set his affairs in order, and hanged himself. Judas Iscariot also hung himself, but his suicide was far more tragic. He, one of the twelve disciples, betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Then he deeply regretted what he had done, and brought back the money to the Jewish leaders, saying “I have sinned in that I betrayed an innocent man” (Mt 27:3–4). As an expression of desperate remorse, Judas hanged himself.”¹

Self-Murder: “The Hebrew language possesses seven words related to killing, and the word used in this sixth commandment appears only forty-seven times in the Old Testament. This Hebrew verb, *rāḥaḥ*, refers only to the killing of a person, never to killing animals, and not even to killing persons in a war. It carries no implications of the means of killing.

If any one of the seven words for killing in the Old Testament signifies what we refer to as “murder,” this is the verb. It implies premeditation and intentionality. Without exception, especially in the later Old Testament periods, it refers to intentional, violent murder (Ps 94:6; Prov 22:13; Is 1:21; Jer 7:9; Hos 4:2; 6:9). In each instance, the act was conceived in the mind first and the victim was chosen deliberately. Thus the Old Testament would never use this verb to denote the killing of beasts for food (Gen 9:6) or the nation’s involvement in a war commanded by God. It would, however, use this verb in reference to self-murder (suicide) and in reference to the actions of accessories to a murder (2 Sam 12:9).”²

"Taking your own life" is an unbiblical expression. God is the giver and owner of all life, including one’s own. "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s." 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹Elwell, W. A., & Comfort, P. W. (2001). *Tyndale Bible dictionary*. Tyndale reference library (1227). Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers.

²Kaiser, W. C. (1997, c1996). *Hard sayings of the Bible* (148). Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity.

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If we could talk to someone who had just entered eternity after killing himself and could ask him if he believes he made the right choice, he would *never* answer, “Yes.” Problems that seemed insurmountable and hopeless one minute *before* death will seem petty and unimportant one minute *after* death, no matter how serious they were on earth. The moment one awakens, whether in Heaven or hell, he or she will realize problems and sorrow are not gone. Earth’s sorrows may be over, but the sorrows and regrets in eternity have just begun. There will be no joy entering into God’s presence having just committed the sin of murder, for there was no space of time to repent. The shame will be excruciating for the full implications of the act will be instantly understood in a way it could not on earth. Certainly, death is not an escape from pain and suffering if one is not a true believer—rather death is the entrance into permanent torment and suffering that pales in comparison to anything anyone knew on earth. Hopelessness may have filled one’s heart with such sorrow and despair that death seemed like the only way out—but one minute after life on earth ends, the truth will be known, for hopelessness in hell is permanent, while hopelessness on earth is not. If we could ask Judas if he would do it all over again, he would cry from the flames in hell, a million times over, “no.”

Suicides in the Bible

There are several cases of suicide, or self-murder as it is more properly called, in the Bible. Not one case is mentioned in a favorable light and not one is named in the halls of faith. Each of them thought they were escaping an unbearable situation by killing themselves, yet in committing self-murder they left an infamous legacy of short-sighted self-absorption and have no opportunity to go back and reverse it. All of them faced very real and very serious problems, yet none believed God’s promise that He always provides a righteous way of escape and is always ready to forgive, and none relied on God in their time of crisis. The motives that moved them to commit such an act seemed reasonable to them at the time, but in the bigger picture of eternity, every one of them see it different today and wish they could write a different ending to their story. If they could come back and give their testimony, it would be a testimony of regret and sorrow for their shortsighted decision. For now they know who God is, and they know He is worthy of every person’s trust, and they know they could have experienced God’s grace as others, if they had only trusted God’s Word rather than their own heart. But it is too late. Their opportunities to live by faith are over.

Abimelech, the son of Gideon, had his armor-bearer kill him after being injured by a woman. The incident was so humiliating to him, he ordered his own death. (Judges 9:54) Samson destroyed a building, thus killing himself and a multitude of Philistines, as an act of revenge. (Judges 16:26-30) King Saul killed himself after losing a battle to the Philistines to avoid what looked to him a hopeless situation. (1 Samuel 31:4) Saul’s servant killed himself as his master had done in an act of misguided loyalty. (1 Sam. 31:5) Ahithophel hung himself after years of bitterness toward David because he had committed adultery with his granddaughter. He was distraught when Absalom rejected his advice and he knew his plot for revenge had failed. (2 Sam. 17:23) Zimri murdered himself, and others as well, when he set the palace on fire with himself and others inside

rather than being taken prisoner. (1 Kings 16:18) Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ, knowing he was innocent, and being filled with remorse but not repentance, hung himself in despair. (Matthew 27:5)

Every single one of these men faced a huge problem or crisis—the kind that often forces a person into a corner and reveals the true condition of his heart. Each man had different motives for killing himself. For Abimelech it was humiliation. For Saul it was prolonged depression and hopelessness. Saul’s servant was moved by misguided loyalty while Ahithophel was consumed with bitterness and anger. Zimri killed himself to escape judicial consequences for the crime of murder and treason, and Judas was consumed with guilt, not believing he could be forgiven for his betrayal. They had no place to turn other than God, but instead of casting themselves at His mercy and refusing to choose a sinful course of action, they assessed the problem “too big” for even God, and became their own god. And that was their fatal error, quite literally.

These men believed, as most suicidal people do, that they only had two choices—continued mental torment, or death. In the face of mental torment they chose death, blind to the fact that God always provides a way of escape that is thoroughly capable of sustaining and delivering them in a crisis. “There hath no temptation [trial] taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful [He cannot lie], who will not suffer [permit] you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Each one of these men had access to God’s mercy, forgiveness, grace and strength—but they turned it down and pushed away the open arms of God, and “ended” their problems in their own way. Their self-murder was ultimately an act of unbelief.

Great men who wanted to die

The trials and circumstances these men faced were not uncommon. Others have and will face difficulties every bit as great. Yet not everyone who faces severe difficulties will kill himself. It is not the severity of the circumstances or the circumstances in themselves that push a person to kill. Rather, it is the way some folks interpret their circumstances and the degree they believe the promises of God and trust His character that determines their course of action. Becoming so discouraged or afraid that one wants to die is not unusual. Most people can think of a time they wished they were dead—or at least thought they would rather be dead. Three well known men in the Bible also felt that way, and told God to kill them because they believed death was their only way of escape.

Moses came to a point in his life where he felt so overwhelmed by rejection, responsibility and other people’s problems that he felt like a failure and complained that the weight of it all was too heavy to bear. In his despair, he cried to the Lord and said, “...kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.” This same man who is one of the most honored and respected men among the Bible prophets, and a man Christ described as the meekest (most humble) that ever lived, felt like dying. However, he did not kill himself. He wanted what seemed to him a righteous resolution, so he asked God to kill him. Thankfully, death was not the solution God had in mind, so He answered Moses’ prayer differently—He showed him

the way of escape. “And the LORD said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.” Moses followed God’s instructions and reached out to other people, organizing a team who would work together and share the responsibilities and problems of governing the new nation. Not surprisingly, God’s solution worked, and Moses was encouraged and strengthened. (You can find this story in Numbers 11:11-17)

The great prophet Elijah also experienced a breaking point, and in his exhaustion, requested God to kill him. The scriptures tell us, “But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers.” God responded with tender love and care by sending an angel to minister to Elijah, not by ending his life. The angel did something very practical, but very needed—he spoke gently to the prophet, made food for him to eat, then let him rest. When Elijah had rested sufficiently, the angel urged him to continue on. Elijah did so, but like other folks who become depressed and discouraged, withdrew into a cave and stayed there. Then God spoke to Elijah and asked, “What doest thou here, Elijah?” God proceeded to give Elijah work to do and urged him on his way. Elijah trusted God, not his emotions, and he went on to accomplish tremendous things for the Lord, discovering what others who retreat into depression learn—one cannot conquer depression by withdrawing in solitude. Worthwhile labor is a powerful antidote. (You can find this story in 1 Kings 19:4-9)

Lastly, the prophet Jonah also imagined he was better off dead, and asked God to take his life. He had just finished preaching the greatest revival in history, for the whole city of Ninevah repented and turned to God as a result of Jonah’s warning. But Jonah wasn’t happy with the results—he would have rather God destroyed the city in retaliation for the pain and sorrow the wicked Ninevites had caused his nation, Israel. So as he sat on a hill watching the city and realized God was not going to destroy it, he became distraught and filled with self-pity. His focus was on his own disappointment and the hatred he felt for the Ninevites. He did not consider this turn of events a victory for God or a miraculous intervention that spared the lives of little children. Forgiveness and mercy were far from Jonah’s mind. He wanted only revenge, and it ate him up inside to the point he would rather die than live.

So God sent Jonah an object lesson and then asked a few very thought provoking questions. We read, “And it came to pass, when the sun did arise, that God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live. And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he [Jonah] said, I do well to be angry, even unto death. Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in

a night: And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" We do not know what became of Jonah, or whether or not he had a change of heart. What we do know is that he is presently enjoying the beauty of Heaven in perfect fellowship with many Ninevites who were saved the day he preached the Word of God in their city. We can be assured he no longer holds his former perverted views of justice and no longer believes he knows better than God. (This story can be found in Jonah 4:8-10)

A big mistake

One of the greatest mistakes a suicidal person makes is believing his life belongs to himself, thereby giving him the right to kill or not kill himself. When he chooses to kill himself, he does not "take his own life" as many suppose. What he does is take a life that belongs to God, for God alone is the giver and owner of all life. We are merely caretakers, or stewards, of what God has given. This is why suicide is more accurately called murder. Like all murder, it involves deliberately choosing to destroy a life that belongs to God, and this is a sobering reality with grave implications.

God entrusts many things to the care of human beings. The earth and all the animals and plants on the earth belong to God, yet God has entrusted its care to man. We are to care for it and use its resources wisely, knowing everything we enjoy on earth is given by God. God claims ownership of all that is on the earth when He says, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." (Psalm 50:10) But God instructed man to be stewards of what is His. "...Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." (Genesis 1:28)

We are given the ability to reproduce ourselves and bear children. These children are not our possessions, but a gift that belongs to God though they are entrusted to our care. We are commanded to nurture and love them, but never possess or abuse them. Those who would mistreat one of God's little ones will be held responsible, for they touch the apple of God's eye. "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 8:6)

Believers are given the ability to reproduce themselves spiritually just as God has given humans the ability to reproduce physically. As He does with physical children, God gives new life to spiritual children, and believers participate in the miracle of every new birth in Christ. Jesus tells us, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;" (1 Peter 5:2)

We are to be good stewards, or caretakers, of the earth, the animals on the earth, our children and all who are born to God through the new birth. We are also to be good stewards of our bodies and our life which also belong to God. Paul says to us, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye

have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) God is the creator and giver of life and holds our breath in His hands. It is foolish to think we own our life or that we that have the ability to do with it what we like. Such thinking is distorted, for it does not recognize the fact that God created us an eternal being and that God has given us a body and a life on earth that we must give an account of one day.

The fact that we are given the freedom to make choices, including the choice to destroy our life or use it for God's glory, is a gift from God. We have the power to kill our body only because God gave it to us. But we have not been given the power to destroy our eternal soul nor to raise it up again. We can kill our body, but we cannot kill our soul. Christ warned, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (Matthew 10:28) This is why suicide is so dangerous and such a serious a sin—it disregards the fact that every one of us will stand before God and give an account of what we did with what He entrusted to our care.

Belshazzar was a ruler who had heard the Gospel message and knew about the God of Israel. Unlike his father who repented of his sin and acknowledged the King of Heaven, Belshazzar lived life on his own terms. He did not acknowledge God as the sovereign King who had given him his kingdom or his life. He ignored God and treated his life as if it were his own. He did not fear using the vessels that were dedicated to God's house as goblets for his drunken orgies, nor did he give any thought to the fact that God would one day hold him responsible for his stewardship.

One night, however, everything changed in Belshazzar's life. God spoke to Daniel and instructed him to confront the king. After reminding him of his father's experience and repentance toward God, he said, "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified?" That night, he was told, God would deliver him into the hands of his enemies. His body would be destroyed, but his eternal body and soul would stand before God and he would be judged. What a frightening thought, for in eternity, no one is given the power to destroy himself or escape the judgment of God." (You can read this story in Daniel 5:23)

To solve ones problems one's own way, to ignore God's promises and obey one's impulses instead, is a terrible mistake. It forgets that we as human beings are not our own to do with ourselves as we please. We belong to our Creator and will one day stand before him, either confident, having trusted ourselves to God's promises, or ashamed having handed our life to the destroyer. A wise man said, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." (Ecclesiastes 11:9)

Thoughts of death

Suicidal people do not wake up one morning and suddenly discover a compulsive urge to kill themselves. It is something that grows very gradually, from the tiniest seed of hopelessness or anger into a tangled massive vine of despair and gloom of staggering proportions. It starts out slow, and then picks up speed as its root system begins to dominate a life. The obsessive and powerful compulsion to die starts as a passing thought, perhaps a wistful thought, or a careless statement, “I just want to die.” When the sadness of broken dreams, disappointment, frustrated expectations or failure begin to hum their tune, the mournful sound is allowed to replay over and over in the mind until it drones on continuously throughout the day and into the night. Soon self-pity and helplessness arrive to add their voices to the refrain, while not long after, guilt and accusations complete the choir. The sound continues and builds, louder and louder, until the mournful refrain “I just want to die” becomes an overpowering sound that drowns out any voice of truth that whispers and reasons, “There is hope. God is hope.

Did God Himself not say, “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me?” (Psalm 50:15) Isn’t He the God who said, “I will never leave thee or forsake thee?” (Hebrews 13:5) And isn’t this the same God in whom the murderer, David, found mercy and forgiveness and caused him to say, “For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.” (Psalm 86:5) Would the same God who told his disciples to forgive a repentant brother seventy times seven in a day forgive any less? (Matthew 18:22) Look up, not within, and listen to His voice, His loving and gentle voice, for it is *He* who “...healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:3) When Paul bitterly lamented “O wretched man that I am!” he asked *who*, not *what*, would deliver him. He said, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 7:24-25)

There are two tunes playing in a suicidal mind—one screams, “Kill! Destroy! Give up! There is no hope!” The other tenderly pleads, “Live! Trust God! Don’t give in! God is with you to help you! He will not forsake you! Choose life!” One voice says, “And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed,” (Deuteronomy 31:8) but the other voice is the voice of the destroyer who murders, accuses, lies and steals one’s joy like a thief in the night. Jesus tells the weary suicidal soul, “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10) “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” (Matthew 11:29)

The ugly music will stop, and the storm will cease its raging when the evil one is banished from the thoughts of a heart and Christ is invited in with His sweet Words of comfort, grace and peace. But as long as that evil tune is entertained and played, over and over, so long will the mental torment go on until Satan wins the victory he wants to win and has his prize—death. Then he will laugh and mock the one who so foolishly listened and believed his lie. He is called the accuser, a liar and a destroyer. His battlefield is the

mind and his work is to destroy every human being, including those who have been bought by the blood of Christ. This is why Paul's admonition and instruction is so precious to believers, for they alone have a Savior who delivers them when they listen and obey. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Satan's lies

Satan is like a playground bully who intimidates and threatens and delights to torment, but in reality is a frightened and cowardly weakling who is all bark and no bite. Satan is a defeated foe who knows his time is short. He is filled with rage and wicked malice and accuses Christians before the throne of God day and night. He is an evil bully who pretends he has power over God and makes the unsuspecting and ignorant cower in a corner in fright. But like the little scrawny playground bully, he runs when someone more powerful than he shows up. All a believer need do is choose to obey God and say, "It is written..." and the enemy bully flees, for God appears when His Word is spoken. Someone's Father stands between His child and the evil one, who is no match for the Father's strength. This is the heritage of God's children. He is a Father who protects His children when they obey Him and call upon Him when the bully shows up with his lies and accusations.

Paul expressed concern for young believers who were being bullied and lied to by Satan. He understood the battle was taking place in their minds and he knew the Christian's victory was to believe God's truth and reject Satan's lies. He told the people, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3) Every suicidal person is in a spiritual battle, and the territory up for grabs is his mind. He who controls the mind and makes it a stronghold is he who wins the battle. Every lie the evil one convinces his victim to believe is a victory, and ground is lost. The more Satan's lies are believed and the less God's truths are believed, the more territory the enemy controls and more power he wields. The only way to win this battle is to recognize we are no match in spiritual battles that are a duel to the death—but there is a mighty One who offers to fight our battles for us if we, like a good soldier, will follow his orders and fight His way. We successfully resist the devil and send him running the moment we submit to the Word of God and trust His promises. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7)

The Christian's battle plan found in Ephesians 6 is much more than a trivial Sunday school lesson that makes good coloring pages for little children. It is a simple yet powerful "secret" code that sets the enemy in retreat. Paul tells us, "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and

having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; (Ephesians 6:11-16)

Notice how often we see words like, devil, darkness, wickedness, evil, and wicked in these six verses. Yet at the same time we see the words that obliterate them such as truth, righteousness (which is the righteousness every believer has been given by Christ), peace, faith, Word of God, Spirit, prayer. In them we see the secret to victory. Every single fiery dart of the devil can be deflected with God's truth and faith in His Word.

Depression is the dart of emotional despair that results when one sorrows, but has no hope. One who is mortally wounded by its arrow believes the lie that God is not good and His words cannot be trusted. Anger is the dart that pierces one who does not trust God in times of disappointment, injustice, or adversity. It overtakes he who lowers the shield of faith and believes the lie that one deserves something better, that revenge is sweet and that God is not a God that sees and deals with justice.

Self-pity is the fiery dart that hits the one who believes the lie it will bring comfort to one's soul. Instead of comfort, self-pity brings only pain and sorrow. Rebellion is a dart that strikes those who believe the lie that says God's authority brings confinement and oppression, when in truth, it brings freedom and protection. Fear is a dart that wounds and cripples those who believe the lie that God does not love His own when they fail and does not hear when they suffer. The faith that quenches this painful dart is the truth that says, "...we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16) Yet perhaps the poison dart more deadly than all is the one that convinces the wounded there is no hope, that the wounded will never win when the truth is, every child of God can say with Paul, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." (Romans 8:37)

The lies of the devil destroy. We are told he is our enemy, the one who walks about seeking who he can devour with his lies. The Bible says, "He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44) What a contrast to the character of our loving and merciful Savior who freely gives His light and love and truth! The Bible tells us the truth of God sets us free from every sin that would enslave us and steal our hope and joy. Jesus says to those who believe on him, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:31-32)

God has a future, and it is always good

A person who kills himself often fails to see how God, in the future, rights wrongs, deals with injustice, gives victory over failure, and reverses adversity. They see instead, their worst fears. Some who kill themselves do so, not because they are depressed, but because they are angry and want to hurt those they believe have hurt them. They imagine their death will make the ultimate statement and make people understand the depth of their distress. The thoughts that have played and replayed over and over again in their minds are sometimes thoughts of revenge coupled with thoughts of self-pity. The comforting thoughts and words that Christ speaks to His own, urging them not to fret or imagine ways to retaliate, are pushed aside. Instead of committing their case to God and trusting Him to deal with offences and adversity in His own way and time, anger is fueled by instant replays that are rehearsed in the mind until they are memorized in detail and consume every waking moment.

One so consumed in anger will not listen to reason nor rise to the challenge to shine as a light in a dark world. Anger blinds him like a thick fog until he can not see any further than the moment. Sadly, it is then that thoughts of murder begin to sound like a pleasant salve for his wounds. As it is with every murderer, thoughts of hatred and anger fill the heart and precede the act. The results they imagine will be nothing as they suppose, for in reality, their act will produce questions, not answers, and will bring sorrow, not satisfaction or closure. They could not be any more self-deceived than when they imagine death to be the answer to their confusion and distress.

David too, was wronged by others. His disappointment was excruciating, for he loved some of those who wounded him most deeply and remembered days of friendship when they sat together in church. David lamented, "For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company." David's disappointment threatened to swallow him up, but David's faith in God's promises and God's character strengthened him and held him up.

Like all of us, David felt, at times, that no one understood him and he longed for that human hand of compassion. He said, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul." The thought that no one really cared threatened to consume David, but he knew the deception of his own heart and cried out to God, confessing his confidence that God understood, as no man could, and God loved him though others had persecuted him. David said, "I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." (Psalm 142:4-7)

David experienced some desperate nights of sorrow and despair. He played with the mistaken notion that God had forsaken him or rejected him in those isolated and dark times when his thoughts reached a morbid low. Certainly his circumstances appeared to

him to be hopeless to the point that he, at times, refused to be comforted and cried into the night when no one but God heard. Yet every time David turned his thoughts from his darkened heart and gazed instead on the promises of God, his hope revived and he was strengthened and encouraged. His outlook would take an about face and he would dare to look forward to what God had promised, that wasn't yet a reality. He reminded himself that God's love and mercy were infinite and that he was in God's thoughts and care. In one of those moments he said, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living." (Psalm 27:13)

What kept David from giving up wasn't the hope of Heaven, as precious as that is. It was the hope and promise that his present crisis would end and he would see the goodness of God in this life on earth. A person who kills himself stops looking forward to the future. His suffering is meaningless and valueless for he sees it only from his own perspective and not the perspective of eternity. He loses sight as to how God uses adversity for good and how God delivers His children from their destructions and adversity. He ignores the hundreds of reassuring promises that God provides for strength, direction and encouragement. We are able to read about David's life from beginning to end, and see how God wonderfully led him through the dark valleys of his life and back into the sunshine again. But David did not have the Bible to read and did not know how God was going to move in his life. He had to take God at His Word and simply know He would.

Suicide is a choice. Living is a choice. God is not silent. He calls to those who are desperate and confused, afraid and seemingly alone, "... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: (De 30:19b) "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Scriptures that help us see Adversity differently

Adversity steers us away from error

Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

Adversity motivates us to draw near to God

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee; yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. Ps. 57:1,2

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up. James 4:8-10

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matt. 11:28

Adversity teaches us to pray

And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. Ps. 50:15

I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord... Ps. 116:1,3,4

Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the rock that is higher than I. Ps.61:1

Adversity gives us the opportunity to see God's power

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not. Jer. 33:3

Ah Lord God! Behold, thou hast made the Heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee. Jer. 32:17

Be still and know that I am God. Ps. 4:4

I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Ps. 27:13

The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise Him. Ps. 28:7

Adversity is often God's way of correcting us for our future good

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore, and repent. Rev. 3:19

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Prov. 28:13

Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. Isa. 59:1

Adversity provokes us to recognize and judge sin in our life

For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. I Cor. 11:31,32

Adversity teaches us obedience that we may be blessed

Though He were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which He suffered. Heb. 5:8

Adversity deepens bonds of friendship and love within a church body when known

For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Heb. 10:34

Adversity develops inward character, faith, patience, wisdom

We glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed... Rom. 5:4,5

Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. James 1:3

Now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations; that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. I Peter 1:6-7

It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments. Ps. 119:72-73

I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Ps. 119:75

Adversity redirects our attention from temporal to eternal matters

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are

seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Adversity conquers our pride and generates humility, which precedes blessing

Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Prov. 13:10

A man's pride shall bring him low; but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit. Prov. 29:23

Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Luke 14:11

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time; casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you. I Peter 5:6,7

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. II Cor. 12:7

Adversity openly demonstrates and warns of sin's consequences

By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. Prov. 16:6

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. Gal 6:7

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. I Cor. 11:28-30

Adversity reveals our ability or inability to trust God

And His disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us; we perish. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Matt. 8:25,26

Adversity teaches us how to appropriate God's promises and comfort so that we in turn may comfort and guide others.

Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. II Cor. 1:3-4

God often uses adversity to change the direction of our life

See Esther, Joseph, Daniel, Joseph & Mary, Ruth. Suffering was used in these people's lives to put them in the right place at the right time so that they might be used of God and receive great reward.

Adversity reveals Satan's work and alerts us to the reality of our enemy

Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand... Eph. 6:11-18

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. I Pet. 5:8-9

Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.

But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:6-7

Adversity makes us understand our human frailty and God's strength and ability

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong. II Cor. 12:7-10

That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and answer me. Give us help from trouble; for vain is the help of man. Ps. 108:6

Adversity is evidence God loves us - Heb. 12:6-7 10-13

Adversity enables God to ultimately bless us and reward us - I Pet. 5:6-7 I Pet. 4:12,13,19

God uses adversity to conform us to Christlikeness - Rom. 8:28-29 Eph. 2:10 Philp.2:13 Isa. 64:8

Adversity is allowed by God and is in God's control - Job 2:10 I Cor.10:13

Adversity can be used for our ultimate good - Rom. 8:28

Not all adversity is necessary - Jer. 2:19 Gal. 6:7-8 I Cor. 11:31-32