

# **Suicide**

**By Mark Mayberry**

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## **Introduction**

On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, I received an email message from a faithful brother in the Philippines named Gerald. After reporting on his recent evangelistic efforts, he said,

“I am very sorry to report to you a recent mishappening that just happen to our congregation San Pedro Church of Christ. Last Wednesday I received a very bad news that one of our brother in our congregation committed suicide. Brother [name withheld] killed himself by gun in their home because of depress. It is breaking my heart and brings tears to my eyes every time I remember him even until now. The San Pedro congregation is composed of tribes men, native of Kalinga a minority group of our country with culture that most old ones would kill themselves when they have a disease which is hard to cure so as not to be a burden to the family. This is what I am strongly opposing and teach them always not to commit suicide because life is precious in the sight of our God. But one has fallen, this is very hard for me to accept even to a brother who has been so dear to me. Every time I make my visit in San Pedro I am always with him because his home is in the entrance of the village. I am enduring the difficult road to hopefully help them reach heaven but one has fallen. I am really hurt and I can feel what his family feel right now. Please pray for her wife who is very sad at this time. The second day we bury him after the funeral service my Dad conduct and some preachers come to attend. Sir you have teach me to preach the word to people but have not teach me how to control my feelings when situation like this came. Honestly sir, my heart is very troubled and hard to bear because of this. Do I have any sin as a preacher in situation like this? Maybe I was thinking I should have teach more and more about the topic. I am really very sorry. Please sir, I need your advice...” Your son in the ministry, Gerald”

Responding to this message, I said, “Dear Gerald, I was saddened to hear about the untimely death of brother [name withheld], who killed himself with a self-inflicted gunshot. Suicide is a sad reality, even here in America, among those who are overwhelmed with despair. Naturally, you are broken-hearted at the loss of a friend and brother. However, do not blame yourself for his tragic decision. Each individual is responsible for their choices. Perhaps you might be able to incorporate the following ideas into a sermon on this important subject. Yours, Mark Mayberry.”

## **An Act of Faithlessness**

Suicide is an act of faithless rebellion against the will of God (Romans 10:17). The command, “You shalt not kill,” is repeatedly affirmed in the Old Testament (Genesis 9:5-6; Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:17), and echoed in the New (Matthew 5:21-22; Romans 13:8-9; James 2:10-12).

Notice that the command has no direct object. The text does not say, “You shall not murder your neighbor/fellow man.” Rather, it simply says, “You shall not kill.” Accordingly, we may infer that the prohibition includes, not only the murder of one’s fellow-man, but also the destruction of one’s own life. Suicide is self-murder.

*Romans 10:17 ... 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (NASB95)*

*Genesis 9:5-6 ... 5 “Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man’s brother I will require the life of man. 6 “Whoever sheds man’s blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. (NASB95)*

*Exodus 20:13 ... 13 “You shall not murder. (NASB95)*

*Leviticus 24:17 ... 17 ‘If a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death. (NASB95)*

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*Matthew 5:21-22 ... 21 “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ 22 “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. (NASB95)*

*Romans 13:8-9 ... 8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. 9 For this, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (NASB95)*

*James 2:10-12 ... 10 For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. 11 For He who said, “Do not commit adultery,” also said, “Do not commit murder.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. (NASB95)*

## **An Act of Finality**

Furthermore, suicide is an act of finality, robbing us of the opportunity of repentance (Acts 8:18-24). It terminates our time of preparation prematurely and precipitously, leaving us unprepared to meet God (Amos 4:9-12).

*Acts 8:18-24 ... 18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, 19 saying, “Give this authority to me*

*as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” 20 But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! 21 “You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. 22 “Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. 23 “For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.” 24 But Simon answered and said, “Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me.” (NASB95)*

*Amos 4:9-12 ... 9 “I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; And the caterpillar was devouring Your many gardens and vineyards, fig trees and olive trees; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the Lord. 10 “I sent a plague among you after the manner of Egypt; I slew your young men by the sword along with your captured horses, And I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the Lord. 11 “I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the Lord. 12 “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.” (NASB95)*

Nevertheless, suicide does not end it all. Beyond the grave, there is awareness (Luke 16:19-26); after death comes the judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10-11; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:12-13).

*Luke 16:19-26 ... 19 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day. 20 “And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, 21 and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores. 22 “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. 23 “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 “And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ 25 “But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. 26 ‘And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’ (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 5:10-11 ... 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest to God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 9:27 ... 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (NASB95)*

*Revelation 20:12-13 ... 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. (NASB95)*

## **An Act of Futility**

Suicide may be a sanctuary for wicked men, but it is not solution to life's suffering for the faithful. As someone once said, "Suicide is a permanent answer to a temporary problem."

### **Example of the Wicked**

Describing Judah's sin and treachery, the prophet Jeremiah said, "And death will be chosen rather than life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family, that remains in all the places to which I have driven them" (Jeremiah 8:1-3).

*Jeremiah 8:1-3 ... 1 "At that time," declares the Lord, "they will bring out the bones of the kings of Judah and the bones of its princes, and the bones of the priests and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem from their graves. 2 "They will spread them out to the sun, the moon and to all the host of heaven, which they have loved and which they have served, and which they have gone after and which they have sought, and which they have worshiped. They will not be gathered or buried; they will be as dung on the face of the ground. 3 "And death will be chosen rather than life by all the remnant that remains of this evil family, that remains in all the places to which I have driven them," declares the Lord of hosts. (NASB95)*

In the book of Revelation, wicked men cried out to the mountains and to the rocks, saying "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:12-17). As they suffered the consequences of their transgression, the text says, "in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them" (Revelation 9:1-6, esp. vs. 6).

*Revelation 6:12-17 ... 12 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; 13 and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. 14 The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; 16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; 17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?" (NASB95)*

*Revelation 9:1-6 ... 1 Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. 2 He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. 3 Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. 5 And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. 6 And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. (NASB95)*

### **Example of Job**

In contrast, reflect upon righteous Job. Despite his great loss, physical pain and anguish of heart, he bore up under adversity, refusing the path of suicide. Although Job longed for death (Job 3:20-26; 7:11-21), he never acted upon that impulse (Job 1:20-22; 2:7-10). Doubly-blessed because he endured, Job re-experience God's compassion and mercy (Job 42:10-17; James 5:10-11).

*Job 3:20-26 ... 20 "Why is light given to him who suffers, And life to the bitter of soul, 21 Who long for death, but there is none, And dig for it more than for hidden treasures, 22 Who rejoice greatly, And exult when they find the grave? 23 "Why is light given to a man whose way is hidden, And whom God has hedged in? 24 "For my groaning comes at the sight of my food, And my cries pour out like water. 25 "For what I fear comes upon me, And what I dread befalls me. 26 "I am not at ease, nor am I quiet, And I am not at rest, but turmoil comes." (NASB95)*

*Job 7:11-21 ... 11 "Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit, I will complain in the bitterness of my soul. 12 "Am I the sea, or the sea monster, That You set a guard over me? 13 "If I say, 'My bed will comfort me, My couch will ease my complaint,' 14 Then You frighten me with dreams And terrify me by visions; 15 So that my soul would choose suffocation, Death rather than my pains. 16 "I waste away; I will not live forever. Leave me alone, for my days are but a breath. 17 "What is man that You magnify him, And that You are concerned about him, 18 That You examine him every morning And try him every moment? 19 "Will You never turn Your gaze away from me, Nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle? 20 "Have I sinned? What have I done to You, O watcher of men? Why have You set me as Your target, So that I am a burden to myself? 21 "Why then do You not pardon my transgression And take away my iniquity? For now I will lie down in the dust; And You will seek me, but I will not be." (NASB95)*

*Job 1:20-22 ... 20 Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head, and he fell to the ground and worshiped. 21 He said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." 22 Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God. (NASB95)*

*Job 2:7-10 ... 7 Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. 8 And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. 9 Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" 10 But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (NASB95)*

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*Job 42:10-17 ... 10 The Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the Lord increased all that Job had twofold. 11 Then all his brothers and all his sisters and all who had known him before came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversities that the Lord had brought on him. And each one gave him one piece of money, and each a ring of gold. 12 The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had 14,000 sheep and 6,000 camels and 1,000 yoke of oxen and 1,000 female donkeys. 13 He had seven sons and three daughters. 14 He named the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. 15 In all the land no women were found so fair as Job's daughters; and their father gave them inheritance among their brothers. 16 After this, Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons and his grandsons, four generations. 17 And Job died, an old man and full of days. (NASB95)*

*James 5:10-11 ... 10 As an example, brethren, of suffering and patience, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. 11 We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and is merciful. (NASB95)*

### **Examples of Peter and Judas**

Compare Judas and Peter. Both sinned greatly. Judas betrayed the Lord, while Peter denied the Lord. After realizing their transgression, both despaired. However, Peter's response is infinitely superior to that of Judas. In committing suicide, Judas followed the coward's pathway (Matthew 27:3-10; Acts 1:15-26). Peter repented of his sin, and was restored to faithful service (John 21:15-19). Herein, we observe the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world (2 Corinthians 7:8-11).

*Matthew 27:3-10 ... 3 Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, 4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" 5 And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. 6 The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." 7 And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. 8 For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. 9 Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one*

*whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; 10 and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord directed me.” (NASB95)*

*Acts 1:15-26 ... 15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, 16 “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. 17 “For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry.” 18 (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out. 19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘Let his homestead be made desolate, And let no one dwell in it’; and, ‘Let another man take his office.’ 21 “Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us— 22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” 23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. 24 And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen 25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” 26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. (NASB95)*

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*John 21:15-19 ... 15 So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.” 16 He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” 17 He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Tend My sheep. 18 “Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” 19 Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me!” (NASB95)*

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*2 Corinthians 7:8-11 ... 8 For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— 9 I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. 10 For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation,*

*but the sorrow of the world produces death. 11 For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. (NASB95)*

### **Example of Paul**

Remember also Paul, who suffered a painful thorn in the flesh. He prayed for relief. However, when the Lord said, “No,” Paul did not despair, but rather said, “Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10). Personally desiring to depart and be with Christ, Paul also recognized the need for continued effort (Philippians 1:21-26).

*2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ... 7 Because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me—to keep me from exalting myself! 8 Concerning this I implored the Lord three times that it might leave me. 9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.” Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. 10 Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong. (NASB95)*

*Philippians 1:21-26 ... 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. 23 But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; 24 yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again. (NASB95)*

### **Conclusion**

Let us listen attentively to family, friends, and fellow-Christians, being ready to help in time of trouble. Those who are strong should bear the infirmity of the weak (Romans 15:1-3). Those who are spiritual should assist the fallen (Galatians 6:1-2). Those who are faithful should restore those who err (James 5:19-20).

*Romans 15:1-3 ... 1 Now we who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those without strength and not just please ourselves. 2 Each of us is to please his neighbor for his good, to his edification. 3 For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.” (NASB95)*

*Galatians 6:1-2 ... 1 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that*

*you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ. (NASB95)*

*James 5:19-20 ... 19 My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth and one turns him back, 20 let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins. (NASB95)*

Despite present trials and tribulations, let us hold out hope, repeatedly affirming “Now is not the time to quit!” Cultivating a the spirit of endurance (Luke 21:19; Romans 8:18-25; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2), let us view “Today” as a day for faith, an hour of fidelity and fellowship, a time for full obedience (2 Corinthians 6:1-2; Hebrews 3:13-15; 4:6-7).

*Romans 8:18-25 ... 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. 19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. 23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. 24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? 25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. (NASB95)*

*Luke 21:19 ... 19 “By your endurance you will gain your lives. (NASB95)*

*2 Corinthians 6:1-2 ... 1 And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain— 2 for He says, “At the acceptable time I listened to you, And on the day of salvation I helped you.” Behold, now is “the acceptable time,” behold, now is “the day of salvation”— (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 3:13-15 ... 13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, 15 while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.” (NASB95)*

*Hebrews 4:6-7 ... 6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, 7 He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.” (NASB95)*

Let us live so that we, like Paul, can say, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

*2 Timothy 4:7-8 ... 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NASB95)*