

*What about suicide? What happens to those who commit suicide?*<sup>1</sup>

Historically the church has taken a dim view of suicide. However, many people do, in fact, kill themselves.

I was once asked on a television talk show whether people who commit suicide could go to heaven. I answered with a simple yes. My answer caused the switchboard to light up like a Christmas tree. The host also was shocked by my response.

I explained that suicide is nowhere identified as an unforgivable sin. We do not know with any degree of certainty what is going through a person's mind at the moment of suicide. It is possible that suicide is an act of pure unbelief, a succumbing to total despair that indicates the absence of any faith in God. On the other hand, it may be the sign of temporary or prolonged mental illness. Or it may result from a sudden wave of severe depression. (Such depression can be brought on by organic causes or by the unintentional use of certain medications.)

One psychiatrist remarked that the vast majority of people who committed suicide would not have done so had they waited twenty-four hours. Such an observation is conjecture, but it is based on numerous interviews of people who made serious unsuccessful attempts at suicide and subsequently recovered from their overwhelming discouragement.

The point is that people commit suicide for a wide variety of reasons. The complexity of the thinking process of a person at the moment of suicide is known comprehensively by God alone. Therefore, God alone is able to render a fair and accurate judgment on any person. Ultimately, an individual's salvation is dependent on whether he or she has been united to Christ by faith alone. The fact remains that genuine Christians are capable of succumbing to a tidal-wave of depression.

Though we must seek to discourage people from suicide, we leave those who have done it to the mercy of God.

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<sup>1</sup> *SURPRISED BY SUFFERING*, © 2010 by R. C. Sproul, ISBN-13 978-1-56769-384-3, pp. 191-92