

## CLEAR THE AIR: Burning Issues Confronting Christians Today

### Sermon #1: EUTHANASIA, SUICIDE AND CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

#### Genesis 9:6

When a loved one is on life support, or a friend is battling suicidal thoughts, or a vote involves the death penalty, what are believers to think about such things? How do we handle these matters in a way that is loving and biblical? We hope this message will provide a helpful starting point for thinking clearly about these controversial and timely issues:

### 1. EUTHANASIA

#### a) Biblical Perspective:

Although Scripture forbids all forms of euthanasia, we believe that "letting die" is an acceptable option when death is both imminent and inevitable. Here are (4) Biblical guidelines regarding death:

- 1) Death is inevitable (Eccl 3:2). Each person should make preparations for death.
- 2) Death is an enemy (1 Cor. 15:26). The believer should use every opportunity to delay death so he can continue serving others for the Lord.
- 3) Dying is a process (Heb. 11:21, 22). When a patient's disease is terminal, measures to control pain, sustain nutrition, and to reasonably (not unnecessarily) prolong life must be done.
- 4) Suffering is a part of present earthly life and death (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; 1 Pet. 5:9-10). Therefore, pain cannot be a valid reason to justify euthanasia.

#### b) Bottom line:

Euthanasia proponents claim to show mercy by killing those in pain. But this defies the instruction of the God of all mercies in Psalm 119:156. Instead of mercy killing, Christians need to do **mercy living** as we pray for, visit, and care for the dying among us. Finally, to die well, believers must trust God. It is not euthanasia that is a good death. Rather, it is the Christian who maintains his faith in God even unto death and leaves this life with joy who truly dies well.

### 2. SUICIDE

#### a) Biblical Perspective:

- Believers going through deep discouragement or hopelessness should be encouraged to find hope in God (Psalm 42:11; 62:5-8; 130:5-7; 1 Timothy 6:17; 1 Peter 1:13).
- Depression is sometimes connected with underlying sin (Psalm 32:3-4). Though medications may be prescribed, drugs aren't the final cure. The Bible is the cure for issues of the heart (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:3).

- Those struggling need to be pointed to the truth and hope of the gospel. They must be reminded that suicide is a sin that is never warranted, nor is it ever the right solution to whatever problem they're facing. Even in the darkest of trials, believers are called to trust in God and prayerfully rely on Him for strength (Matthew 6:25-34; Romans 8:28; James 1:2-3).

#### **b) Bottom line:**

If a genuine Christian commits suicide in a time of extreme weakness, he would still be in heaven due to Romans 8:38-39. However, such an act of hopelessness would not normally characterize a true believer, since God's children never lose hope (Acts 24:15; Romans 5:2-5; 8:24; 2 Corinthians 1:10) and purpose in life (Luke 9:23-25; Romans 8:28; Colossians 1:29). Though it's possible for a true believer to commit suicide, we believe it to be **a very unusual occurrence**. Anyone considering suicide should be urged to examine himself to see whether he is in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5).

### **3. CAPITAL PUNISHMENT**

#### **a) Biblical Perspective:**

- The principle of capital punishment was instituted by God (Genesis 9:6) upheld by Christ (Matthew 26:52) and reiterated by Paul (Romans 13:4). The New Testament underscores a government's God-given right to impose the death penalty for willful murder.
- By divine design, civil punishment exists to deter wickedness. If government fails to enforce just consequences for murder, it threatens both national stability and the individual security of its citizens. When done properly, capital punishment serves as a terror to wrongdoers, restraining hardened criminals from what they would otherwise do (Romans 3:10-20) thereby saving lives.
- Christians who serve in law enforcement or civil government have a God-given responsibility to uphold justice and oppose corruption.

#### **b) Bottom line:**

How can we oppose abortion, euthanasia, and suicide and yet support the government's right to capital punishment for willful murder?

- 1) *The Sanctity of Life:* Human life is sacred and must be protected. Hence, abortion and euthanasia are ruled out. Execution of willful murderers underscores the sanctity of life and the seriousness of taking the life of others.
- 2) *The Principle of Justice:* The unborn, the aged, and the sick have done nothing deserving of death. The rightfully convicted murderer has. Justice demands rejecting abortion and euthanasia and judging those who have willfully ended another person's life.
- 3) *Ethics Based On Divine Command:* God prescribes the protection of the innocent and the punishment of those who take life. If one follows those divine commands, he will have to reject abortion and euthanasia and favor capital punishment.