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**Divine Grace and the Problem of Suicide:
Does Suicide Exempt the Deceased from the
Hope of Future Redemption?**

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Introduction

The approach to answering this question is not that normally employed or expected in a research paper. As in all questions concerning the teachings of the Holy Scriptures of the Judeo-Christian Faith, the answers are to be found in the Scriptures themselves. The most accurate, indisputable, unbiased commentary on the Scriptures is the Scriptures. Those who practice the Christian Faith have accepted these Scriptures as the inspired, literally “God-breathed,” Word of God. Without this commitment to the “trustworthiness” of Scripture there can be no solid foundation upon which Truth can stand and definitive answers be revealed.

II. The Biblical Perspective

The question of whether suicide exempts the deceased from the hope of future redemption can be answered from the biblical perspective with either a resounding “yes” or an equally resounding “No.” According to the whole of the Scriptures, there is no hope of future redemption after death. Whether the cause of death was natural, accidental, or even self-inflicted, there is no biblical provision for redemption after death. If the deceased is not redeemed prior to death, they cannot be redeemed after death. But if the deceased was redeemed in life, there is no kind of death that can cancel that redemption.

Hear the words of the Apostle Paul who wrote to the Christians in Rome “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 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” (Rom. 8:38-39).

To further validate this answer, we must rely on the Scriptures’ declaration of the eternity of salvation in Christ and thus the eternal security of the believer. If the deceased was a believer in Jesus Christ, the answer to the question of our subject lies in the definition of redemption, inclusive of its duration. The answer lies in whether or not the “everlasting life” of John 3:16, “for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life,” or the “eternal life” of John 5:24, “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life,” and other “salvation texts” is to be taken literally as “never ending” or “figuratively and temporary.”

III. The Essentiality of Eternity

Eternality is an essential attribute of God. Without the reality of eternal existence, God would have had to “come into being.” If He has not always existed then there was a time when He didn’t exist! That is a portrait that is inconsistent with the abundance of God’s Self-revelation in the Scriptures. God’s eternal past existence makes His eternal existence in the future believable. If He had no beginning, He can have no end. If God predates eternity past, then He will be at the conclusion of eternity future!

Over 100 times different words in both Old and New Testaments are translated “eternal” and “everlasting.” These words are used to describe God Himself and future realities including future dwellings (Lk. 16:9), judgment (Heb. 6:2) punishment (Mat.25:46), and destruction (2 Thess. 1:9). These words are also used to describe the duration of God’s kingdom (Ps. 145:13; 2 Pet. 1:11), dominion (1 Tim. 6:16), power and glory (Matt. 6:13), (2 Tim. 2:10) and redemption and salvation (Is. 45:17; Heb. 5:9, 9:12).

But the greatest usage of these words is in relation to eternal life. The Gospel of John and 1 John contain multiple references to eternal life (Jn. 3:15-16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:40, 47, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2-3, 1 Jn. 1:2, 2:25, 5:11, 13, 20) as do the writings of Paul (Gal. 6:8; Rom. 6:23; 1 Tim. 1:16, 6:12; 2 Tim. 1:2, 3:7).

Old Testament saints, prophets and kings testified to the truth of God’s eternal existence and spoke as inspired vessels of revelation regarding the duration of future conditions and relationships. For example: Genesis 21:33 Then Abraham planted a tamarisk tree in Beersheba, and there called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God.

Isaiah 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the Lord, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. Jeremiah records this testimony of God: “The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you’” (Jer. 31:3).

Ezekiel records God’s promise of establishing a never ending covenant with Israel: 16:60 “Nevertheless I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting covenant with you.”

Daniel records the testimony of a pagan king whose encounter with the most high God convinced him that God was the great King whose kingdom and dominion would never end.

How great are His signs, And how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And His dominion is from generation to generation.
Dan. 4:3

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and

honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, And His kingdom is from generation to generation. Dan. 4:34.

The writer of Deuteronomy wrote “The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deut. 33:27). The writer of Isaiah wrote “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:6).

IV. Endurance

The indisputable proof of personal salvation is endurance. The Writer to the Hebrews sought to encourage Jewish converts to Christianity to hold on to their faith in Christ. Some who had joined the fellowship of Christian Disciples were reverting to Judaism because of religious persecution from opponents of the Christian Faith. The proof of the genuineness of their faith was to be revealed in whether they “endured to the end.” No one can detect the genuineness of another’s faith by their profession alone. But genuine faith behaves in a fruit bearing manner that is visible to all. The fruit of the Spirit is undeniable and perseverance is to be expected of true believers. Listen to the words of the Hebrew Writer: “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:23-39).

IV. Empowered Proclamation

The truth of the eternal security of the Christian believer gives power to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe that because He lives, because He conquered death, hell, and the grave, we too shall live eternally with Him.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those

who are Christ's at His coming." The Apostle John records these words: "And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death'" (Rev. 1:17-18).

V. The Doctrine of the Eternal Security of the Believer and Its Impact on Other Irrefutable Christian Doctrines

1. The Omniscience of God

Both Testaments of the Judaeo-Christian Scriptures declare the complete, absolute, full, limitless knowledge of God. If the plan of redemption is not eternal, it is a flawed plan which reflects a lack, a shortage, a deficit of knowledge on the part of its architect. It would also produce an inexplicable conundrum. How can one with the creative genius to design a perfect universe not employ the same creative genius in devising a plan to save His greatly loved Human Race? "Omniscience" and "failed plans" are incompatible realities.

2. The Omnipotence of God

A failed plan of redemption would also call in question God's omnipotence. Even if the plan is perfect, one must still have the necessary resources, the power, to execute the plan. Knowledge itself is a form of power but knowledge alone is not adequate to execute the plan. In John 10:27-30,

Jesus said "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one."

This points to the omnipotence of God and the inability of anyone to undue His plan. Redemption is not in the hands of the redeemed; it is in the hands of the Redeemer. Redemption was provided and protected by Almighty God.

3. The Love of God

In John 3:14-18, Jesus said,

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,

that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The love of God demands that redemption be eternal; otherwise it is an incomplete redemption; it is an imperfect redemption; it is a failed redemption. “Incomplete, imperfect and failed” is not a phrase that can be used to describe a plan made by an omniscient and omnipotent God. A perfect God cannot devise an imperfect anything; otherwise the imperfection in the thing devised would reveal the imperfection in its creator. From the love of God flows the grace of God. The grace that saves is the grace that keeps and sustains. The grace that gives does not rescind. To rescind is to cancel as one would a contract or agreement; to nullify a law or an order. It is to annul as in a marriage. Grace does not take back, repeal or revoke. In the case of God’s justification of sinners, (through the shed blood of Christ) un-eternal redemption would un-balance the books of God’s justice. It would be an “unjust act” by a “just God” – which is an oxymoron of infinite magnitude. A “just God” would “cease to be just in His Own Eyes” if He even entertained the idea of “temporary redemption!”

Conclusion

The final “proof” that is offered to support the truth of the eternal security of the believer in Christ Jesus as Savior and Lord is that “one cannot be unborn!” To be “born again” into the family of God is to gain a place, a position that cannot be undone.

The Lord Jesus Christ who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:6-11).

Jesus Christ will always be the Son of God and He will always be the Son of Mary! She will always be His mother on His human side. She is not and cannot be His mother on His God-side unless she existed before the foundation of the world. He did exist before the foundation

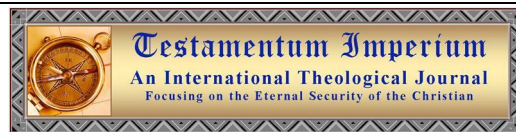
of the world! And redemption was purchased: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8).

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross (Col. 1:13-20).

Peace was made through the blood of His Cross! Redemption in the Judaeo-Christian faith must be eternal or else it dissolves into a mere reprieve, a postponement, a temporary solution to a problem that needs a permanent solution.

One of Jesus’ last words before He laid down His life was *telestai*; translated “It is finished.” The purpose and mission for which He had come to Earth had been fulfilled. It was complete. Nothing else to be done. Finished! If Christ’s death was insufficient it was also unnecessary. Why put the Son of God to death in the most ignominious way known to man if it was not sufficient?

The following quote from Our Daily Bread’s meditation for January 8, 2013, succinctly captures the essence of the author’s position: “We’re far from perfection, yet perfect forever, For Christ is our righteousness, Lord, and our Savior; No justification for sin can we offer, Yet sanctified fully, we’re now His forever. —Lee”



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