

GRACE & PEACE

An E-periodical For spiritual enlightenment, edification and encouragement.



WHOM DO WE MANIFEST?

Page:1



CAN OR WILL A CHRISTIAN COMMIT SUICIDE?

Page:4

IN THIS ISSUE :

Perspective:	Outline:	Practical:	Study:	Exhortation:	Anecdote:
Whom Do We Manifest?	Our Father in Heaven	Can or Will a Christian Commit Suicide?	The Brazen Altar- Part 4	Examine Yourself	Christlike-ness
1	3	4	7	8	10

Whom Do We Manifest?

 By Nelson Thomas

Once the Lord Jesus was talking to a group of Jews who claimed to be His followers; His conclusion was mind-blowing, “You are of your father the devil” (John 8:44a)!

Naturally, they were offended by Christ’s strong statement and reacted with anger and animosity (cf. vs. 48, 52, and 59). The entire conversation (John 8: 31 – 59) is worthy of serious study for us to escape such illusive suppositions. It is not enough that we make a claim of our faith; Christ

makes it very clear that an appropriate life is essential.

In the beginning of the talk itself He exposed their true state, telling them that were not true disciples (vs. 31). When they chose to refute it and argued with their Abrahamic heritage, the Lord explained further of their bondage in sin pointing out to their murderous character (Vs. 34 – 38).

Devilish Characteristics

Refusing to accept the Lord’s indictment, they further claimed to be born of God (v. 41). Christ then declared unequivocally, “You are of your father the devil”. The Lord did not stop there, but went on to explain the reasons behind such a conclusion, “the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him..... for he is a liar and the father of it.” (John 8:44).

conversation in fact proved beyond doubt, Christ’s words were absolutely true (V. 59). This so-called ‘believers’ were actually promoting deception and destruction, which are devilish characteristics.

Beloved, the word of God categorically states, true Christian life is not just following an ideology or being part of a social group, but living out a Christ-like life. Our belief must be balanced with suitable behavior.

Their aggressive reaction at the end of the

Work of Salvation

To understand this truth more, we need to consider the various aspects involved in God's work of salvation. When a sinner turns to Christ the Saviour confessing their sins, not only they are forgiven and saved from the eternal judgment but they are also regenerated by the wonderful operation of God. Thus, a sinner by birth becomes a child of God (John 1:12, 13; 3:3, 5; 2Cor. 5:17).

From that moment of spiritual birth, God begins a work in us (Phil. 1:6). The

ultimate aim of that work is to make a believer conformed to the image of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29). Slowly but surely the indwelling Holy Spirit imparts the life of Christ into the practical life of a Christian.

So, a born-again believer realizes that all the experiences they are going through are part of this divine program to develop the Christ-like character in them (Rom. 8:28, 29).

Divine Characteristics

All those who are born of God not only possess the divine nature but also exhibit the characteristics of the heavenly Father (1John 3:9; 2Peter 1:4). It is very much reasonable for the offspring to exhibit the parent's qualities. Yes, it may not be in all perfection, yet the Lord expects a fitting level of godly character in His people as the days go by (2Cor. 3:18).

On the contrary, if someone claims to be

part of God's people, yet their life is characterized by evil deeds and unholy words, it's a contradiction. According to Apostle John, such ones are liars who do not have any truth in them, and they dwell in darkness (cf. 1John 1:6; 2:4, 9; 4:20). For, light and love are two divine characteristics that ought to be found in those who are born of Him (cf. 1John 1:5, 6; 4:7, 8).

Love for Enemies

The Lord Jesus also refers to light and love as essential evidence of regeneration (Matt. 5:14, 44 – 48). In His well-known Sermon on the Mount the Lord says, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven..." Matthew 5: 44, 45a. If Christ expects His followers to treat their enemies with love, what about treating

their own brethren? If Christ demands us to pray and do good to all who stand against us, how should we relate with our fellow believers and family members?

A loving and prayerful relationship proves our new birth from the Heavenly Father. For He is full of love and compassion towards mankind, in spite of the way they respond to Him. We who claim to be the children of God are bound to exhibit the same love,

compassion and mercy towards all our fellow beings (Luke 6:36).

If one habitually hates and uses abusive words against fellow beings, it's high time for them to scrutinize their claim of new

birth. Apostle John minces no words while writing about such Christians, "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1John 4:20).

Yield and Grow

It's definitely a blessing and privilege to be born of God. It's God's own work from beginning to the end (Phil. 2:13). However, God cannot change a person who is rigid and rebellious. It is our responsibility to yield to the Holy Spirit each moment so that we may grow towards a Godlike attitude more and more (Rom. 8:5; Gal. 5:16; 2Cor. 3:18).

Let us examine sincerely, whom do we

manifest? Are our words and deeds reflecting the characteristics of our heavenly Father? Is our life characterized by truthfulness, love and compassion?

Yes, we may not have arrived there yet, however, let it be our lifelong pursuit and prayer to have a Christ-like attitude and response pattern (Phil. 3:12; 2:12).

OUTLINE

Our Father in Heaven

 By NTK

1. Sees in Secret. (Matthew 6: 4a, 6b, 18a)
2. Rewards openly. (Matthew 6: 4a, 6b, 18b)
3. Knows our needs. (Matthew 6: 8, 32)
4. Attentive to our Prayers. (Matthew 6: 9)
5. Forgives our debts and trespasses. (Matthew 6: 12, 14)
6. Feeds birds in the sky. (Matthew 6: 26)

Practical:

CAN OR WILL A CHRISTIAN COMMIT SUICIDE?

 By Tom Johns, Austin, Texas.

I am reasonably sure that at some point in time some of us were in such a desperate situation when we felt ‘it is better for me to die now.’ This thought may or may not have reached the point of seriously considering some means to achieve that. Also, there may be someone reading this article who has a family member or close friend who had committed suicide.

You may have some questions about whether such a person could be a Christian, even though you may have felt that he / she had shown evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You could be grieving over his / her death considering these uncertainties. There might be someone facing extremely hard circumstances and he or she is contemplating suicide. My prayer is that this article would minister to the hearts of all of us.

Isaiah 42:3 “A bruised reed he will not break, smoking flax He will not quench” [quoted in Matthew 12:20] is the mission of Jesus Christ. A reed that is used to make a musical instrument, once cracked is no longer useful; and in the same way, a smoldering wax candlestick is no longer useful to give out light. In the eyes of the

world, those are simply useless but in God’s miraculous plans they can be brought to good use.

Often, when we see such ‘bruised reed and smoldering wick,’ we are eager to walk away and discard and forget the fact that God could be at work. Our mission is to work hand in hand with God’s plans and when we are willing to do that we become less and less judgmental and dogmatic.

SUICIDE IS A SIN

Suicide is self-murder. Exodus 20:13 – “You shall not murder.” But just like any other sin, suicide can be forgiven. Colossians 2:13-14 states very clearly that those redeemed by God have been forgiven for all their sins – past, present, and future. In Romans 8:38-39 Paul states emphatically that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. This is not our love for God, but God’s love for us concerning the redemption. In verse 39, it says – “nor any other created thing.” Suicide is to be considered as one of the ‘created things.’

Even though suicide is equal to murder and the person will not get a chance to confess

the sin and reestablish fellowship with God, if the person is saved, he / she will be in heaven. Once we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, we no longer carry the burden of delivering us to God as faultless and sinless, but it is by Jesus Christ. Jude 24 –“Now to Him who can keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty.” It is the joy of Jesus Christ to present us faultless before God the Father. It is not because we are ‘faultless’ but Jesus Christ is faultless.

WHO ALL COMMITTED SUICIDE IN THE BIBLE?

Six specific people committed suicide. Abimelech {Judges 9:54}, Saul & Saul’s armor-bearer {1st Samuel 31,} Ahithophel {2 Samuel 17:23}, Zimri {1st Kings 16:18} and Judas in the NT. Samson caused his death, but it was in the act of killing the enemies, hence it is not considered suicide. Except for the armor-bearer, about who we do not know, all the rest were known to be wicked and sinful. So, the biblical precedence is against any Christian committing suicide. But this does not rule out the possibility of a genuine Christian, in a moment of desperation ending his/ her life.

PROMISES OF GOD

Isaiah 61:1-3 “The LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve, to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of

gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.” God truly wants us to be happy because God had offered provisions for us to be happy.

Our circumstances cannot be any worse than what our Lord had faced. Job lost everything in life and had lost his health. His boils were very painful, and his wife became even more painful to him. Yet Job had a potsherd that he could hold and scratch his body which gave him some relief. When our Savior was hung on the cross, His hands were nailed to the beams and the Creator of the universe could not swat the flies that may have attacked the wounded body in His strength or by His own hands! Our Lord knows it all.

GOD DELIVERS US FROM HARM

Even when our faith is weak and our strength is feeble, God provides strength in miraculous ways. If you are in such desperation, contemplate the life of Jonah. We hardly consider this book as a depiction of God’s love for one individual. While executing God’s purposes for a city, God showed how merciful and compassionate He is to one disobedient prophet.

Jonah volunteered to be thrown overboard. He was unwilling to repent and pray to God to send him back to Nineveh. Instead, he wanted to die. Jonah never expected a Whale to be there to swallow him. He expected to die he made that clear while debating with God regarding the plant that provided shade for a day. We see Jonah as a candidate for suicide who wants to end his life but hoping it would be by someone else’s hand. The motive is the same.

But God ordered a Whale to swallow him. God preserved him in the belly of a fish, whether he died there and then made alive, we do not know. God ordered the fish to go and vomit this man on to the shore! Miracles after miracles to preserve a man who God loved, even when the man was bitter and disobedient and wanted to end his life! This is the God we have. No circumstance can justify someone especially a Christian taking his / her own life. We are called to live our lives for God and the decision on when to die is God's and God's alone.

If you know someone who is suffering from mental illness that could lead to suicidal thoughts, such people must be given medical care. Also, read the warning labels

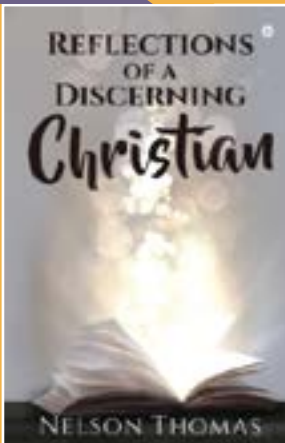
and side effects of some medicines that enhance such thoughts. Many medications in today's market would push someone with a suicidal propensity to the edge and commit it.

Let us be sympathetic to someone who may have ended life in any such tragic way and make sure their family members are well supported and lavishly loved fulfilling our Lord's mission for His people. He will not 'break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax.' Let us also 'strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees.' [Isaiah 35:3]

Your brother in Christ, Tom Johns
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MRP 270 /-

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STUDY :

Notes on Tabernacle – 14: The Brazen Altar - Part 4

 By Charles E. Wigg, Australia

Five cubits square:

Presuming that Moses used the Egyptian cubit, which was approximately half a metre, or twenty inches, this would have meant that the brazen altar was more than eight feet square, (two and a half metres.) A big man may measure 6'8" from fingertip to fingertip, so that it was beyond the power of man to span or to grasp the mighty extent of that altar, and for us the mighty extent of the redeeming work of Christ. The hymn says that it is "Broader than the scope of my transgression, Deeper than the mighty rolling sea".

The sacrifice of Christ not only redeems lost man to God, but also a vast creation that was stained by the sin of man. The world to come - the millennial age - is all based on the mighty scope of the sufficient sacrifice of Christ. When Adam fell, not only did he plunge the whole human race into ruin, sin and death, but he also made

the creature, the innocent animals, subject to the bondage of corruption.

When the Lord Jesus comes in His glory to reign, the whole creation that now groans and travails together in pain, will then be set free, but only because Christ died, Romans 8:18-23. We are told in Heb 2: 9, that the Lord Jesus "tasted death for everything", (J.N.D.)

The fact that it was foursquare, would teach us the universal scope of the sacrifice of Christ. The number four in typical teaching, usually represents what is universal, there are the 4 points of the compass, North, South, East and West, there are the four winds of heaven, and there are the four corners of the earth.

It is because of the universal scope of Christ's sacrifice, and the salvation He purchased through that suffering, that we can now go to men, wherever they are, from North to South, from East to West, and joyfully proclaim the Gospel of Salvation.

EXAMINE YOURSELF

 By Nelson Thomas

Any medical expert would recommend going for a complete health check-up periodically once you cross a certain age. Just imagine, you neglect such an advice and all of a sudden come to know that you are seriously sick, it may be too late!

Similarly, in our spiritual life, we need an occasional spiritual health check up to see how our spiritual life is, how healthy and strong are we in connection with the things of God. Do not just assume that we belong to Christ and everything is okay.

Notice what Apostle Paul wrote to members of the Church at Corinth:

“But let each one take heed how he builds on it.” (1Cori. 3:10c). “But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” (1Cor. 11:28). “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves...” (2Cori. 13:5).

This means that whoever we are, a church

member, pastor, preacher, evangelist, or whatever may be our position in the congregation we attend, the Bible calls upon everyone to examine ourselves.

Remember four things:

a. *It's not our business to examine others.*

Often we prefer and even enjoy evaluating others. That attitude only leads us to self-righteousness and pride. “Judge not that you may not be judged.” Matth. 7:1 (1Cor. 4:5).

We can only see and hear about others, not what is in the inside (1Sam. 16: 7). So, if we try to judge others, not only we make a blunder, but it's also a rebellion against God, who is the only true judge. For we are trying to take His place!

b. *Our assumption may not be right.*

We may think that we are in the right path. But our understanding is limited. Listen what the wise man says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” (Pro. 16: 25). “All the ways of man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirits.” (V. 2).

c. *The Lord knows exactly and judges accordingly Jer. 17: 10.*

“I the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind. Even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.”

d. *Nothing shall remain secret forever, Matt. 10:26; Mar. 4:22; 1Cor. 4:5b.*

Not only does God know the entire secret exactly, He will make it known. Sooner or later all our secrets will be out! It's absolutely impossible to keep something hidden forever.

Notice what Christ says. “For nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known.” (Matt. 10:26). “For nothing is hidden except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret except to come to light.” (Mar. 4:22).

Paul also wrote, “...The Lord comes, who

will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.” (1Cori. 4:5b).

Some think, ‘God will reveal only in future and we will see then!’ No, He has the right to reveal at any time. (cf. Joshua 7; Acts 5; Reve. 2, 3, etc.). It seems the Lord reveals our sins today itself so that we may repent, confess and find cleansing by the precious blood of Jesus Christ.

Dear friend,

The Lord knows us exactly. He may allow us to continue in our rebellious ways for some time, but one day we will have to stand before Him, and then it will be too late. The Devil may make sure we remain in the dark. Not only he has blinded the eyes of unbelievers, he even hinders believers from leading a holy and right life.

Let us examine ourselves, and test our spiritual life today. How is our practical spiritual life? How would the Lord find us as He examines the secrets of our life?

Oh, let us not deceive ourselves. Search the word of God and plead with the Lord, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.” (Psalm 139: 23, 24).

Worthy Quotes:

“The process of sanctification, growth, and increasing Christlikeness should be going on continually while here on earth.”

-William MacDonald

“The first evidence of spiritual growth is Christlikeness.”

-Warren W. Wiersbe

“The race toward Christlikeness begins with a sense of honesty and dissatisfaction.”

-John MacArthur

ANECDOTE:

Christlikeness

 By Bill Morgan

On a wall near the main entrance to the Alamo in San Antonio, Texas, is a portrait with the following inscription:

“James Butler Bonham -- no picture of him exists. This portrait is of his nephew, Major James Bonham, deceased, who greatly resembled his uncle. It is placed here by the family that people may know the appearance of the man who died for freedom.”

No literal portrait of Jesus exists either. But the likeness of the Son who makes us free can be seen in the lives of His true followers.

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