

The Right To Live

A Biblical Analysis of The Right to Die Ethic

Romans 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Debbie had terminal cancer

1. Breathing was labored; down to 80 lbs.
2. New doctor came in to her room
3. Looked at chart; saw no progress
4. Leaned over and whispered in her ear, "Let's get this over with."
5. W/o consultation, measured out 20 mgs. of morphine and injected it into her.
6. 4 mins. later, she was dead
7. Doctor wrote it up, sent it in anonymously to JAMA; firestorm of debate

B. Janet Adkins

1. Early 1990, diagnosed with progressive Alzheimer's
2. Found a doctor who agreed to help her take her life - Dr. Jack Kevorkian
3. Flew to Michigan
4. Got into a Volkswagen van, started the "suicide machine"
5. Janet Adkins was only 54 years old
6. She had beaten her son at tennis just a few days before
7. Dr. Kevorkian has written a book which became an overnight bestseller *Final Exit*; in which he defends the "Right To Die" Ethic and suggests ways to commit suicide

II. THE RIGHT TO DIE

A. This Issue Has Come To The Fore Of Public Debate

1. Reason is two-fold
 - a. modern technology has made it possible to sustain life for long periods of time, often past the point of recovery
 - b. two world views are clashing
 - Christian/Biblical worldview
 - Humanistic worldview
2. So we see the debate over suicide and euthanasia

B. Our Plan

1. Share some basic verses about the Biblical view of human life, and death
2. Define some terms
3. Tie the two together

C. The Christian/Biblical View of Life and Death

1. Traditional, orthodox view is called "The Sanctity of Life" ethic
2. Genesis 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his [own] image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
3. "Sanctity" means special, separate and distinct
 - a. human life is in a higher order
 - b. it is "in the image of God."
 - c. this image conveys special value
 - d. sanctity of life means the value GOD places on human life, over animals
 - e. animals DO have value
 - Creation Mandate > stewardship, not neglect
 - Proverbs 12:10 A righteous [man] regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked [are] cruel.
 - Deuteronomy 25:4 Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out [the corn].
 - f. humans have more
 - Matthew 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.
4. God originally intended life to be eternal
 - a. death came with sin
 - b. it is an intrusion
 - c. Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin [is] death; but the gift of God [is] eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
5. At the Fall, one death came; another delayed
 - a. spiritual death came
 - b. physical death was delayed
 - so that grace might have an opportunity to work
 - in the delay came the promise
 - with the promise comes faith
 - with faith comes forgiveness
 - with forgiveness comes a restoration to life
 - thus, death is conquered
 - I Corinthians 15:54-55 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?
6. Another foundation of the Sanctity of Life is it's origin
 - a. God created man, and He maintains His sovereignty over man
 - b. in matters of life and death, He is the Final Arbiter
 - c. Daniel 5:23 But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; . . . the God in whose hand thy breath [is], and whose [are] all thy ways, hast thou

- not glorified.
- d. Job 12:10 In whose hand [is] the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.
- e. Deuteronomy 32:39 See now that I, [even] I, [am] he, and [there is] no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither [is there any] that can deliver out of my hand.
- 7. It is on the basis of the Sanctity of life that God prohibits murder
 - a. Genesis 9:5 And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.
- 8. This is our foundation

C. The Clash of Worldviews

1. We have entered the post-Christian era
2. A Biblical worldview is being rejected in favor of a humanistic one
3. in a humanistic worldview, human life has no intrinsic value
4. Value is assigned by one's self or by the society at large
5. With the embracing of humanism, our policy regarding death has been called into question
6. If God is not sovereign over life and death, then man is.
7. The question that arises is "When is death preferred to life?"
8. "The Right to Die" movement has made a concerted effort to bring this question to the fore of public debate - and they have succeeded
9. By persuasive argument, they have swung discussion their way.

D. Clarify Our Terms

1. Euthanasia = good death
 - a. death w/o suffering
 - b. mercy killing
2. Passive euthanasia
 - a. the withdrawal of "heroic" or "extraordinary" means
 - b. this does not include basic life support; food, water, air.
3. Active euthanasia
 - a. positive intervention to bring about death
 - b. the introduction of some substance or application of some procedure which will bring about death
4. Suicide - the personal choice to take action leading to one's death
5. Death
 - a. 3 factors: respiration, heartbeat, brain activity
 - b. if respiration or heart fails, brain quickly expires
 - c. generally, brain death is seen as critical factor
 - d. now, doctors are able to differentiate between lower and higher brain functions
 - basic life functions
 - reasoning and thinking; consciousness

- e. in large, the question of when it is appropriate to let someone die has come about because of the technological advances which permit a body to be kept functioning long after any chance for recovery is expired.

E. Case Specific

1. Each individual case must be considered on its own
2. Yes, we have solid principles to use as guides
3. But each case must be considered under those principles
4. The problem - we do not know when God has set the time of a person's demise
 - a. we don't want to hinder
 - b. nor promote
5. Prayerful counsel must go with each case

F. Reviewing The Options

1. Active euthanasia
 - a. 2 forms: voluntary and involuntary
 - b. voluntary = suicide
 - c. involuntary (incapacitated) = murder
 - d. may be with motivation of MERCY
 - but is it mercy?
 - wouldn't mercy be to show compassion and try to bring relief or ministry of help
 - what about intense pain and suffering?
 - suffering is indeed hard to endure
 - but as Christians we believe suffering has its role to play in life > it has meaning!
 - II Corinthians 11:24 Of the Jews five times received I forty [stripes] save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; [In] journeyings often, [in] perils of waters, [in] perils of robbers, [in] perils by [mine own] countrymen, [in] perils by the heathen, [in] perils in the city, [in] perils in the wilderness, [in] perils in the sea, [in] perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not.
 - Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to [his] purpose.
 - Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death
- e. would it not be more merciful to minister and serve the one suffering?
 - Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering,

gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.

- Acts 20:35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.
 - I Thessalonians 5:14 Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all [men].
- f. Paul's thorn in the flesh is an example of how to deal with suffering
- II Corinthians 12:7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

2. Suicide

- a. 3 cases in the Bible
 - Abimelech Judges 9
 - Saul 1 Sam 31
 - Judas Matt 27
- b. others who asked to die
 - Moses Num. 11:15
 - Elijah 1 Kings 19:4
 - Job 6:9 42:1-6, 10-16
- c. it signals a rejection of God's love and power
- d. it marks "despair"
- e. Anne-Grace Sheirinin
 - attempted suicide many times
 - her mother had
 - later she wrote "There is something about suicide that, even when done as an escape from an agonizing terminal illness, signals complete and utter defeat. It is without any semblance of nobility or pride. Life can become too heavy a burden to bear, but the release that suicide offers is not a triumph of life, the ultimate mastery of self over fate, but a grim renunciation of hope and a failure of the human spirit. No matter how bad the pain is, it's never so bad that suicide is the only answer. Suicide doesn't end pain. It only lays it on the broken shoulders of the survivors." Then she concludes, "BY the way: to all the doctors, nurses and physicians who forced me to live when I didn't want to - thank you for keeping breath in my lungs and my heart beating and encouraging hope in me when I didn't have any hope."
- e. Psalms 27:13 [I had fainted], unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

- f. II Corinthians 1:8 For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver [us];
 - g. Philippians 1:21 For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain. But if I live in the flesh, this [is] the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh [is] more needful for you.
 - h. Romans 14:7 For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.
3. Passive euthanasia
- a. everyone is going to die
 - b. Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
 - c. when the prospect for recovery is statistically unreasonable, extraordinary means may be removed.
 - d. there have been case where the person has lived and recovered

G. What Is A Living Will?

- 1. A prepared statement on what action you do or do not want taken in the event you are incapacitated.
- 2. Strong advocacy for these now
- 3. Several states observe them - legally binding
- 4. Big Question - How do you know you will feel that way in the future?

III. CONCLUSION

A. Again - Each Case Must Be Considered But Under These Principles

B. If There Is A Question - Error On The Side of The Sanctity of Life.

C. The Danger of the Right To Die Movement

- 1. A progressive devaluation of Human life
- 2. The standard used is "Quality of life"
- 3. Who determines this?
- 4. This ethic was used in Germany of the 1920's
- 5. Lead to another phrase being used today; "A life not worth living."
- 6. Medical profession proposed the elimination of those whose lives were not worth living
 - a. 275,000 were killed
 - b. handicapped, epileptic, infirm, elderly, bedwetters, those deemed politically incorrect
 - c. to was on this philosophical foundation that Hitler proposed the Final Solution