

When a Christian Commits Suicide

By Rev. James A. Zozzaro

Bible Text: 1 John 2:1-2

Preached on: Saturday, October 27, 2007

Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church

119 East Rio Grande Ave.

Wildwood, NJ 08260

Website: <http://calvaryopcww.org/>

Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/calvaryopcww

First we will hear the Word of God in 1 John 2:1-2. “My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Let us pray. Heavenly Father, speak comfort to our hearts as we look at your Word examining Jonathan’s life. May we be encouraged, may we see our own need of the Savior who died for our sin. In the name of our Lord we ask it. Amen.

I have known Jonathan for many years back to the summer of 1991. Jonathan was very active in the Boardwalk Chapel and he knew I was interested in Christian apologetics. So he liked to pick my brain a lot and talk to me about a lot of things. Over the years and different opportunities I’d do different things and I got the time to spend with him speaking about the Scriptures. Struggling with things that I had the opportunity to counsel him and talk with him about.

Of all the things that could be said about Jonathan, the one thing, I think, that can be said with absolute certainty was this: Jonathan was a Christian. It wasn’t a question about

where Jonathan stood with the Lord. Jonathan was a Christian. He had been born again by the Holy Spirit. He was united to Christ by faith. He showed in his love ... he showed it in how he cared for other people. Jonathan being united to Christ was a partaker of all the things that come from being united to Christ and justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification. Jonathan was a Christian man. As a Christian Jonathan was called not to sin, to live a life of obedience to the Lord. That's what the passage says here. John writes, he says, "My little children, you Christians, I write so that you might not sin." We who are saved by grace do not see grace as something that is cheap to be trampled on. We don't go through our lives saying, "Well, since Jesus will forgive me I can live however I want."

And Jonathan was quite scrupulous about how he lived. John made a real effort to try to obey the law of God . Sometimes with Jon's obsessiveness at times it really almost drove him to despair. I mean he was almost Luther like in his looking at the law and it driving him, "Well, if this wrong, well then what about this and what about this and what about this?" Because Jon recognized the seriousness of his calling as a Christian man to live by the Word of God.

And yet as a Christian Jonathan did sin. He violated the law of God by taking his own life. This is difficult for many for us. We seem to believe that Christians could obviously sin. We know that as Christian we can still sin, but we can't sin to that magnitude. Think of maybe doing little sins, you know, little things, maybe losing your temper once in a while, maybe watching something you shouldn't watch, maybe, you

know, fudging on your income taxes or something like that. Maybe driving above the speed limit. But not something like this. This is one of the big ten. This is clear. "Thou shalt not kill." And yet as a Christian Jonathan was able to do that. And that causes people to stumble sometimes.

But listen to the text itself. It says, "My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins..." and It immediately says, "I am writing so that you don't sin, but I recognize this side of glory you may sin." You may sin terribly. King David was a man after God's own heart. But with premeditation and malice of forethought David killed Bathsheba's husband. He violated God's law. Christians can violate the law of God. They can do it in terrible ways. And we need to deal with that now. In fact, if you would just look a verse or two before it in verse nine John says, "Anyone who says he doesn't sin is a liar." We sin just like Jonathan. Even as Christians we break the law of God in thought and word. Sometimes in ways that the other people around us don't see us and they still see us as great upstanding Christian citizens. Other times it is patently obvious what we do.

So [because] of Jonathan's sin he has to stand before the judge, the Father. As a Christian Jonathan has an Advocate with the Father. The Scriptures tells us Jesus Christ the righteous. Jonathan has to stand before the Father, the judge of the whole world. But he has someone as a defense attorney, the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the idea of the advocate here.

And what does the Lord Jesus Christ present as the reason why the Father should not find him guilty? Well, knowing Jonathan you might think what the Son does he pleads temporary insanity. That would happen in a court of law. If Jonathan, instead of taking his own life had taken someone else's life then he might honestly be able to prove that Jonathan was temporarily insane. Jonathan had a mental illness. Jonathan could not suffer depression as we think of it. Jonathan didn't have problems. Jonathan had a mental illness at which some times his brain would just change gears. And he would be going from being a happy, joyful person at peace with all that was around him to being paranoid, and panicky and not knowing what to do.

And there wasn't really much of a rhyme or reason. And in a court of law you may have been able to get Jonathan off by claiming temporary insanity for suicide is irrational, isn't it, especially for a Christian. But to claim temporary insanity would not excuse Jonathan before a holy God. Just like none of your excuses for your sin will stand before a holy God. The Lord Jesus Christ does not stand before the bar and say, "I know this person's circumstances and look at all the extenuating circumstances in their life and that is why they sinned. So just let him go this time. Just...just let him off easy because all these things were happening in their life." A holy God cannot let someone go because of extenuating circumstances.

And so what does Jon's defense attorney, the Lord Jesus Christ do? First, he pleads his own righteousness. He says

he is Jesus Christ the righteous one. And he pleads before the Father his own righteousness, his own obedience to the law of God in Jonathan's stead. The Lord Jesus Christ led a life of perfect obedience to the law of God. But he did it not for himself. He did it for his people. So even though Jonathan had broken the law of God and even though you and I break the law of God, in Christ the Father sees only the righteousness of Christ. That's all he sees. He didn't see Jonathan in his sin. He saw the obedience of Christ for him. And he pleads that. This man is righteous, isn't he? It's an alien righteousness, an imputed righteousness.

And then the text also says that he himself is the propitiation for our sins. He pleads also, the Lord Jesus Christ, his own propitiatory sacrifice on Jonathan's behalf. A propitiatory sacrifice is a sacrifice that turns away wrath, the wrath of God which our sin deserves in the Son of God taking Jonathan's place on the cross ... had the wrath of God poured out upon him to satisfy justice. And when the Lord Jesus stands as John's defense attorney he pleads that, "Father, your wrath has already been satisfied. I experienced it. There is no more wrath to be poured out upon your child for on your son it was poured out." That is the Lord Jesus Christ's defense case. And in pointing to his own righteousness that John partook of being united to him and pointing out his own propitiatory sacrifice, his own death in John's stead, the defense rests. And the Father, for Christ's sake, declares Jonathan not guilty, not because Jonathan's sin wasn't serious, but because God's grace is greater than Jonathan's sin. And the love of Christ is greater than the sins of God's people. And as the Scripture says, "Nothing

separates from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord,” not even our own sinful actions. We cannot add to the work of Christ through our own obedience, but by the same token as the children of God we cannot subtract from the work by our sin. Our only hope is Christ. Jonathan throughout his life ... that was his prayer that those of you who loved him would know that, that your hope would be also in Christ, that you would find your righteousness in him, that you would find in him the payment for your sins and the turning aside of the wrath of God.

Christian ... Jonathan not only spoke these things to you that you might receive them but he believed them himself. To be united to Christ by faith Jonathan is declared not guilty because of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Heidelberg Catechism, one of the great catechisms of the Protestant Reformation asks in its first question, “What is our only comfort in life and death?” And I will paraphrase, it of course, this morning by saying, “What is our only comfort in Jonathan’s life and death?” The answer in a paraphrase, “That Jonathan with body and soul, both in life and in death is not his own, but belongs unto his faithful Savior Jesus Christ who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all Jonathan’s sins and delivered him from all the power of the devil and so preserved him that without the will of his heavenly Father, not a hair fell from his head. Yet that in all things, including his mental illness, were made subservient to his salvation. And therefore, by God’s Holy Spirit he also assures us of Jonathan’s eternal life and henceforth makes us sincerely willing and ready to live for him.”

What is our hope this day. It is a hope that Jonathan had. Jonathan belonged to his faithful Savior Jesus Christ in life, in death, and in the resurrection of the body. May that be found in your life today.

Let us pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you that in body and soul, both in life and death Jonathan is not his own but belongs to his faithful Savior. We thank you, Father, for the intercession of your Son the Lord Jesus Christ who pleading his own righteousness and his own sacrificial death for our sin will always work out our guilt before the bar of divine justice, will always find us being declared not guilty, not making excuses for us, but for doing for us that which we could not do, providing for us a perfect righteousness and making satisfaction for our sin. May the thought that Christ was Jonathan's intercessor bring us comfort knowing that Jonathan has been declared not guilty and ushered into your presence as a son . And may the hope that is in Jonathan's heart be ours also as we look to Christ alone as our own only hope in life and death. In the name of our Lord we ask this. Amen.