

King Saul and mercy killing

2 Samuel 1:13, 14

There is a difference between allowing a person to die naturally and inducing death. If a person knows he has terminal cancer and chooses not to take chemotherapy which could perhaps extend life, that's not the same as suicide. If a loved one is comatose, on life-support, or declared brain dead, it's not wrong to remove the breathing machine and let nature take its course. God can still work a miracle if he chooses.

But to deliberately terminate life by administering a pill or injecting poison into the system is to murder. There may be some other very complex issues that have to be decided individually with much prayer, but the Bible teaches that to deliberately take the life of another, even one who is dying, is not our prerogative.

King Saul was fatally wounded in battle. A young man told David, the anointed successor to the throne, that he had seen Saul leaning on his spear. The young man reported, "Then he said to me, 'Stand over me and kill me! I am in the throes of death, but I'm still alive.' So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive. And I took the crown that was on his head and the band on his arm and have brought them here to my lord" (2 Samuel 1:9, 10).

David mourned, wept, and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan who had also fallen by the sword. Then David asked the young man, "'Why were you not afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?' Then David called one of his men and said, 'Go, strike him down!' So he struck him down, and he died'" (2 Samuel 1:13-15).

Life is sacred from the beginning to the end. We're not to take the life of others or our own. That decision is in the hands of God. It boils down to a difference in worldview. The secular worldview is that this life is all there is, therefore the chief end is happiness and comfort. If you're suffering and there's no possibility of restored comfort, your life is over anyway.

But the biblical view is that suffering has a purpose even though we don't fully understand what that purpose is. Life is never futile.

Several years ago Jerry Clark called and said, "My dad is in a coma. The doctors are not expecting him to last the night. Just wanted you to know." I went to visit Gil Clark, and he was unresponsive. The family was gathered around the bed. I had a prayer that Gil wouldn't linger, but would die peacefully and the family would be comforted. The next morning I called to see if he had died, and Jerry said, "Strange

thing—Dad survived the night. He even opened his eyes and spoke to us."

The next day they reported that he sat up in bed and ate something. I visited later in the week and Gil was sitting on the edge of the bed, laughing, and talking normally. There was a sign on the door that read, "Divine Intervention!" I said, "Gil, it's a good thing God didn't answer my prayer. I prayed that you would die!" He laughed and even came back to church, in spite of my weak faith.

Even the experts can't predict when the appointed time will come. The doctors don't always know. The preacher doesn't always know. Therefore, we have no right to terminate life before God's appointed time. He said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 22:13).

Ken Connor, President of the Family Research Council, said, "The way we treat the most vulnerable among us—the unborn and the elderly—is the true test of our country's moral character." ■



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Bob Russell is senior minister at Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, Kentucky.

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- Day 6** Mark 14:12-31
 2 Corinthians 13
 Psalm 109
 2 Samuel 5-7

What Do You Think?

1. Why is all human life sacred to God?
2. What will you do to promote the sanctity of human life in our culture?