

Ethics of Life

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[0 : 0 0] All right, we're cooking. Let's do it. Good morning, everyone. Welcome back to our course! We come today to our eighth and final class. This is it. We've come to the end. So you'll remember that after spending a couple of weeks looking at the sort of general principles of the Sixth Commandment, we then started to move sequentially through a number of different topics beginning at the beginning of life, where we discussed abortion and life in the womb and moving through some topics like capital punishment and war and self-defense. So today we come to the end of life and we're going to discuss the topic of euthanasia and assisted suicide. So as we begin our last class here, let's go ahead and open with a word of prayer. Let's pray together. Triune God, our Creator and Redeemer, you are the author and giver of life and to you all life rightly belongs. It is yours and yours alone to give and to take away. And we worship and thank you for that fact, for your wisdom and for your goodness and for your faithfulness. We praise you. As we consider the topic before us this morning, we ask that you'd grant us wisdom to consider these things rightly, grant us trust in you and your word that all your ways are good. And Father, how could they not be good considering what you have done to rescue us and to demonstrate your love for us? You have given us your Son in love. You've given him up on the cross. You've given him to us in the resurrection, proving that you are trustworthy and that you desire our greatest good no matter what comes in this life.

God, we thank you and praise you for the giving of your Son and for the pouring out of your Spirit. We ask that you would be glorified in our time together this morning. Lead us by your Holy Spirit into truth, into holiness, into love. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. All right. Well, as I mentioned, we're considering the topic of euthanasia this morning. So let's begin by asking, what do we mean by that term? Well, literally, the word euthanasia just means good death from the Greek root words eu, which means good, and thanatos, which is a Greek word for death. And that's kind of quite general, but I'm sure as you all know, specifically how this word is used today and how we'll talk about it today, it has a more specific meaning. Euthanasia has come to mean the act of intentionally ending the life of a person who is elderly, terminally ill, or sometimes suffering from an incurable injury or disease. And closely related to that is what is called assisted suicide or physician-assisted suicide, or sometimes is even called medical aid in dying.

Sometimes people distinguish those two things, euthanasia and assisted suicide. Here's one definition. It says, in cases of euthanasia, another party acts to bring about the person's death in order to end ongoing suffering. In cases of assisted suicide, a second person provides the means through which the individual is able to voluntarily end their own life, but they do not directly cause the individual's death. So you see how they distinguish those two things. Now this issue of euthanasia or assisted suicide most often comes to focus in the case of oftentimes terminally ill patients who are experiencing chronic pain and therefore no longer want to live and may even wish to be put to death.

So that's what we're talking about this morning. Now what is the morally right thing to do in such cases? How as Christians should we approach this question? That's what we're going to think about this morning. And I think the first place to begin is again with a return to the sixth commandment.

[4 : 22] God commands his people in the sixth commandment, you shall not murder. And when we considered this commandment in depth a few weeks ago, we saw that it refers both to what we might call premeditated murder, that's usually what we commonly mean by the English word murder, but it also refers to any accidental causing of a person's death through things like negligence or even carelessness.

And there's really no indication anywhere in scripture that this commandment is lifted or lessened when someone is terminally ill or elderly or in great pain.

Remember that under the sixth commandment, what stands under that command, under that prohibition, is the reality that God is our creator and God is the author of life and that life is his and his alone to give and to take away. And moreover, the sixth commandment points us to the fact, to the reality, that all humans are created in God's image. And because humans are bearers of the image of God, that means that the unlawful taking of the life of another human is prohibited.

Even we ourselves do not have the right to take our own life. So the sixth commandment would seem to give a clear indication that Christians should view both euthanasia and assisted suicide as wrong.

Now, are there any passages in scripture that deal explicitly with this issue? Well, the reality is, is that there aren't, but there might be one. There might be one.

[6 : 11] In his book on ethics, Wayne Grudem points out the passage in 2 Samuel 1, verses 1-16. Now, you probably don't remember what's happening in 2 Samuel 1, verses 1-16, but I'll tell you, this is what's happening.

So, in that passage, a man comes to David after Saul has just died. Saul, remember, was the king. At the end of 1 Samuel, Saul dies, which would make David the king.

So a man comes to David saying, Saul just died. And then the man recounts how Saul had been gravely wounded and then begged this man to take his life.

In effect, Saul was asking this person to perform an act of euthanasia, of mercy killing. So, as the man recounts to David, he followed through with Saul's request.

He killed Saul and then comes to David to tell David about it. And in the context of the socio-political environment at the time, the man seems to be coming to David to say, See, I've done this good deed that hasn't just put Saul out of his misery, but has made you king.

[7 : 22] Right? So he's actually trying to ingratiate himself into David's favor, it seems, at that point. And what is David's response to the man? He's not happy about it.

Go ahead. Yeah, Ivor, you were going to say something, too. Do not touch the Lord's anointed. That's right. That's right. He says, you can't touch the Lord's anointed. Right? So that's one level. Right? Saul was the king.

So you dare not lay a hand on him. But what's interesting in that passage is that David also says, You've murdered him. In effect, David says that even though Saul was gravely wounded, and it's unclear whether this man's even telling the truth, because at the end of 1 Samuel, it seems like Saul falls on his own sword.

So perhaps Saul fell on his own sword and he didn't actually die. So he was asking this man to finish that job that he tried to do. But in effect, regardless of whether the man's telling the truth or not, what actually happened, David says to this man's account, The fact that you've done that, you're guilty of murder.

That it was wrong for him to take Saul's life in that way. Even though Saul was in great pain. Even though Saul was probably not going to recover. So this passage seems to be an example where the sixth commandment is applied as forbidding the taking of another person's life, even if they're in extreme pain, even if they're unlikely to recover.

[8 : 42] However, the life of a human being must still be respected, and it must be acknowledged that it's not our place as fellow human beings to put ourselves in the place of God and end that person's life for those reasons.

Yes. Yeah, that's right.

Yeah, there's definitely... And that's why I say that this passage sort of talks to this issue, right? Yeah. Yeah, Susan's making the point that it seems like one of the big issues, one of the things that made this especially egregious is the fact that Saul was the Lord's anointed.

He was the king, and you're not supposed to lay your hands on the king. And David exemplified that in his whole life with Saul, right? As he was on the run, he said, I'm not going to lay my hands on the Lord's anointed. So yeah, that's definitely a strong feature of this passage from 2 Samuel.

But it is interesting, right? That David says, you still murdered him, right? He uses that language of murder, kind of referencing back to the sixth commandment. So, you know, I don't think we need to put a lot of stock in this 2 Samuel passage.

[10 : 09] It just seems to be one of those places where there may be an analogous instance. So then it would seem that, given what we've been talking about in this whole class, really, that the taking of someone's life, even when they're in extreme pain or chronically ill, terminally ill, is not something that we're permitted to do.

Now, whereas the Bible does condemn the act of killing of another human being, most Christian ethicists realize that there is an important distinction to be made between killing and what we might call letting die, letting someone die.

One writer puts it this way. He says, killing is actively doing something to a patient that hastens or causes their death. On the other hand, letting die is passively allowing someone to die from other causes without interfering with that process.

In the first case, the cause of death is the cause of death is the cause of death. In the second case, the cause of death is the disease, the injury, or aging process that has already been occurring in the person who dies.

And he says, while the Bible prohibits actively killing someone, in the case of letting someone die, the moral decision is more complex. So, there are certainly cases, right, where it would be wrong to let a person die.

[11 : 48] Like, we can all sort of feel that, right? It seems that we should intervene and try to help a person recover when, first, there seems to be a reasonable hope of recovery, right?

And two, when we're able to help. That seems to be a fairly straightforward application of Jesus' command that we love our neighbor as ourself and do for others what we would wish they do unto us.

However, there are cases where it may be right to allow a person to die. In cases where, one, there's no reasonable hope of recovery, sometimes called a situation of futility.

And two, it's the patient's wish in that instance to be allowed to die. And or, we're simply unable to help. We don't have the means or the capacity to be able to help.

In those instances, it may be the right thing to allow a person to die. In these cases, that act is morally distinct from actively murdering a person, right?

[12 : 53] Now, what we're coming up against here are all sorts of end-of-life issues, right? Which can become very complex very fast. And the medical situations can become very complex, right?

What are we able to do with medical technology? What are we permitted to do with medical technology? When is it right to simply entrust someone to the Lord and realize that we are finite human beings and we live in a fallen world and we cannot live forever?

When is it time to just say it's time for palliative care and let this person go, right? And I think determining, along with doctors and ideally Christian medical professionals, what is a reasonable hope of recovery?

What is it that one can and cannot do? And what is one able to do? Those are not always clear-cut decisions. We live in a fallen world and not every decision is going to be straightforward in those end-of-life instances.

But I think granting that and granting much grace as we need to make and decide how we're going to handle some of those hard issues, I do think there is a difference, right?

[14 : 00] There's a clear distinction between what we're talking about this morning, right? Between killing and letting die. Even if there are some challenging and heart-wrenching questions about when it's appropriate to let someone pass away, right?

I think there's a clear distinction between the difficult decision of removing someone from, say, an extreme medical life support system that's very different than a person choosing to end their own life because they've received a terminal cancer diagnosis, right?

So it's in those instances that we're talking about today, and I believe that the Bible's clear that we should view those instances of euthanasia or assisted suicide as morally wrong.

that God numbers our days, and we should entrust ourselves into his hands, and our life is his to give and to take away in his good and wise providence.

Now, what are some of the reasons that people give in support of euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide? I think there are at least three, and I think each one of them can actually kind of be captured by a single word, and you see these words used a lot in conversations around these issues.

[15 : 15] The first reason is summed up in the word freedom or choice, right? The argument goes that people ought to have the freedom to choose to end their own lives, especially if they are terminally ill.

In fact, just last fall in the United Kingdom, there was a bill before Parliament about this thing called the Terminally Ill Adults Bill in the House of Commons, and advocates of legal suicide, a group called Dignity and Dying, wanted to push through this Terminally Ill Adults Bill in the House of Commons, so they did actually a sort of poster campaign in the London Underground with posters making just this argument, this argument for freedom or choice.

And the posters were part of a Let Us Choose campaign. Choice is what was being appealed to there. And the posters showed, they're actually pretty disturbing posters, actually.

They showed a woman, a middle-aged woman in her pajamas, happily dancing in her kitchen with the words, let us choose, plastered there. And then in big letters, it said, my dying wish is my family won't see me suffer and I won't have to.

All over the London subway system. It's got a lot of pushback, by the way. Felt like, even in the UK, that felt like a bridge too far.

[16 : 47] But do you see what's being appealed to in this campaign, right? Choice, freedom. I should have the right to be able to end my own life, especially in those circumstances, right?

And I think in our culture today, that idea of individual autonomy is perhaps one of our highest values, right? Anything that restricts my freedom or limits my autonomy is viewed with suspicion at best and outrage at worst.

And that goes so deep into our cultural mindset that appealing to freedom or appealing to choice or suggesting that in an instance someone's freedom or right to choose might be taken away, that almost immediately gives credibility to the argument, right?

No one should say that I'm not free to make this choice for myself. But what does Scripture say in light of that?

In 1 Corinthians 6, 19 through 20, Paul says, you are not your own. You were bought with a price.

[17 : 53] So glorify God in your body. According to Scripture, we're not autonomous, actually. We are creatures before a creator.

And even more than that, Paul says, you were bought with a price. This is a reference to the work of Christ. That through Christ's sacrifice, he has bought us for himself.

We belong to him through his self-giving love. So flourishing is not found in radical autonomy or radical self-determination or self-rule, but in conforming ourselves to the will of our loving and good creator.

So the argument for choice or freedom only goes so far. There is a limit to where our freedom ends. And this is one of them, I think, according to the Bible.

Now, the second reason people give for supporting euthanasia, physician-assisted suicide, is summed up in the word compassion. Compassion.

[19 : 03] That's a word you'll see very often. Some people are in unbearable, unending pain, and they often only have a few months or years to live.

They will die soon in any case, the argument goes. Therefore, it should be right to act to alleviate that pain. Surely it can't be right to allow someone to suffer so terribly when we can do something about it.

Sometimes it's phrased, right? Now, let me say, of course, as human beings, we should treat our fellow human beings with compassion, right? Those who are suffering need care, love, support, tenderness.

But there are two things that should be, I think, said in response to this argument from compassion. And the first is that there's no biblical prohibition that I'm aware of against palliative care.

Christians should promote every lawful means to alleviate suffering and pain in those who are terminally ill or dying, right? So compassion does want us to move, to reduce or alleviate pain and suffering, right?

[20 : 14] But second, there is kind of an unspoken assumption in this kind of argument from compassion that we should just end the compassion, that we should end the suffering by ending the person's life, right?

There's sort of an unspoken assumption in that reasoning that suffering is meaningless, right? that it serves no purpose and it should be just ended, avoided, or stopped at all costs, even at extreme, ultimate cost.

And indeed, we have to admit that in a kind of naturalistic or in a secular worldview, suffering is by and large meaningless, right? it serves no purpose and should be avoided at all costs, if that is your worldview.

But in the biblical worldview, we see that in Christ, even our suffering and our pain are not actually meaningless.

That God uses even the evils of this world for our good and for his glory. That's not to say that suffering itself is good, but God in his goodness is able to bring good even out of those things.

[21 : 34] And yes, he permits those things for his redemptive purposes. So let's go to the third reason, and the third reason is summed up in the word dignity.

Dignity. You'll see this term quite a bit. In fact, even that group from the UK I mentioned, their whole organization was called Dignity in Dying. Now, this word dignity, I think, combines a bit of the previous two reasons.

Dignity involves, and it means kind of having the autonomy to choose when my life should end, and dignity also means not having to suffer physical pain, right?

But I think this argument from so-called dignity, I think it strikes at a deeper reason than just those two. Because when you think about it, aging, being sick, being weak, being in pain, these things make a person very dependent.

we're no longer strong, we're no longer independent, we're no longer contributing to society, at least in the ways that our kind of capitalist market economy recognizes, right?

[22 : 58] And so, we feel that we don't have any dignity. In other words, we feel shame. We feel as if our life no longer has any worth.

And so, the argument goes, to preserve someone's dignity, they should be allowed to end their life.

But friends, what does scripture say? What does God say? God says that his power is made perfect in our weakness, that our values not determined by whether we can or can't contribute to society.

Our worth, our purpose, our meaning is not determined by the level of our independence, or our productivity, or our physical appearance.

In fact, God says when we're weak, then we're strong. And, like our physical pain and suffering that we talked about under the heading of compassion, God uses even those moments of weakness and dependence for our good to conform us to Christ.

[24 : 22] Now, maybe another thing that we might say on this front is just that facing terminal illness, facing the prospect of pain, maybe even prolonged pain, and in some rare instances, pain that palliative care cannot alleviate.

that's very scary. And as Christians, we would never want to minimize that, minimize the real sorrow that people face when they're in these situations.

And it is understandable that people are very afraid. afraid. And it's understandable that we don't want to face such a fearful and painful future.

Is there any comfort for the fearful in times like these? Well, in Christ, friends, there most certainly is. You know, our God knows what it's like to face pain, to face death, to face rejection from his closest friends, to face shame.

And our good shepherd promises to walk with us with the deepest of compassion as we traverse those dark valleys. Jesus' compassion is literally a suffering with us, a compassion.

[25 : 44] Right? He will enter in with us into those dark places and be with us each step of the way. And the promise is that in the gospel, because Christ suffered for us, when we suffer, we will become like him in our sufferings.

I think it was George MacDonald, who wasn't a very orthodox guy, I'll just say that for the record, but I think it was George MacDonald, he said some good things every once in a while, I think it was George MacDonald who said, Christ suffered not so that we might not suffer, but so that in our sufferings we might become like him.

Right? Paul sort of puts, I think, a good point on this. He says that the afflictions of this life, because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, are preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond compare.

That God is able to take the sufferings of this life and prepare for us through them something of eternal worth and value in the new heavens and new earth.

In fact, do you remember how that goes? How does Paul talk about our afflictions in that verse? What does he call them? A momentary light affliction. Light and momentary afflictions compared to the eternal glory that is waiting for us in Christ.

[27 : 18] So I think we need to say that things like freedom, things like compassion, things like dignity, that those things are not actually found in assisted suicide, in euthanasia.

They're found in Christ. And as we walk with him, together with one another through suffering, he promises neither to leave us nor forsake us, and he promises to work all things, yes, even those most strenuous, difficult things.

God will work even those for our good and for his glory. Now, as we kind of wrap up, I want to talk a little bit, are there any reasons, are there any reasons in addition to God's commands in scripture, some of these commands and also some of these gospel principles, are there any other reasons that we might give against euthanasia or assisted suicide?

Well, one reason we might sort of offer against it is the sort of precedent that it sets. One writer puts it this way, he says, if euthanasia is allowed for some patients who are suffering, then how can we prevent it from being applied to more and more patients who are suffering?

And with the increasing cost of health care for elderly and extremely ill patients, there's likely going to be growing pressure on people to ask that their lives be taken.

[28 : 49] Moreover, nations that have allowed for physician assisted suicide find that a society can quickly move from merely allowing the right to die to the belief that there is an obligation to die on the part of the elderly and the very ill people who are quote, draining resources from society.

And this author says, in such situations, it becomes likely that a number of elderly people will be put to death against their will. So the argument here is that what begins sort of as a right to die begins to transform into social pressure as an obligation to die.

So it's the kind of precedent that this move sets. It's the kind of door that it swings open. And the reality is in some states and countries, actually in most states and countries where euthanasia and assisted suicide have been legalized, there does seem to be a slippery slope.

In Canada, for example, medically assisted dying accounted for 5% of the deaths in the country in 2023. That means 1 in 20 people who died in Canada died by taking their own lives with the help of a doctor.

That's staggering. And in a culture like that, that is going to lead to a place where people begin to hold their lives so lightly and that pressures begin to think, well, I guess I should just end my life.

[30 : 26] It's hard to see how that's not already happening. in a place like Canada or in a place like the Netherlands where the numbers are also very staggering, very sobering, very sad. And I think that leads to another reason.

These are all kind of related. And the second reason is this, is that our laws should ideally protect the vulnerable. But euthanasia and assisted suicide moves in the opposite direction.

Here's how a group of pastors in the United Kingdom express this in a joint letter that they wrote to the members of parliament. Remember last year there was a big debate in the United Kingdom around physician assisted suicide.

Here's an excerpt from a longer letter that they wrote to parliament. said protecting protecting the most vulnerable members of society should be our primary concern. The health care system is already rife with inequalities that disproportionately affect the poor, elderly, ethnic minorities, and those with disabilities.

Rather than addressing these disparities, this bill, that is the assisted dying bill, risks it's exacerbating them. Especially as polling shows that 21% of disabled individuals fear that assisted dying laws would pressure them to end their lives prematurely.

[31 : 46] In the state of Oregon, in the United States, where assisted suicide is legal, 43% of those who chose assisted suicide cited a fear of being a burden on loved ones as a factor in their decision.

In other words, legalizing assisted suicide opens the door for vulnerable members of our society to be at risk of ending their own lives prematurely.

Friends, that's not the sort of culture or society we want to sow towards, where death is seen as a viable option to solve problems of pain, loneliness, financial hardship, or simply the feeling that one is a burden.

One more thing to add. Rather than investing in assisted suicide, we should rather invest in palliative care.

Again, this was an argument that these pastors in the UK took. They said in that same letter, they said, improved palliative care should be the focus, ensuring that patients can die with dignity and support rather than expanding the option of assisted suicide.

[33 : 02] In the UK, there was a lot of observation that the palliative care system was so underfunded and receiving so little support and that the passage of such a bill would put people in those situations in such hard, moral places.

Now I understand that the UK system is different than ours because they have a national health care system and things like that, but it's hard to see how the same would not be true in the United States, even given the differences.

So again, rather than focusing on expanding assisted suicide, focus on expanding the kind of lawful and God-honoring care, palliative care that we can give to those who are nearing the end of their days.

Seems like a much better way to focus our resources. Okay. Well, let's wrap up there.

On that happy note, here we end our class. We've got a little extra time for conversation together. We can reflect on our topic today if you'd like or we can reach back to previous topics that we've covered or maybe ones that we even haven't.

[34 : 06] So we can just have a good 15 minutes of just questions, conversation, reflections, things that have stood out to you in the class, whatever it is you'd like to talk about. Yes, Matt. Sometimes I think there's an issue regarding giving palliative care and contributing to the death of the patient.

Oh, interesting. Yeah. You know, that could be a complex call. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. There is no denying the fact, Matt.

That's good. Matt is saying that sometimes administering palliative care can seem to be contributing to the dying of a patient, right? Does it kind of speed their dying process? I think this is where as Christians we need to just trust our brothers and sisters in the medical field and realize that in a fallen world there's no sort of perfect, clear-cut, straight-line way to handle these things.

You know, I think maybe it's true, right? Maybe it's true that some methods of palliative care do speed someone's end of life. I think we just have to move in matters of conscience on that.

Yeah. Did you have more you wanted to say on that, Matt? Was there other things you were thinking? No, you said it well. Yeah. A second issue that I've heard, and not very often, not of late, about saying I agree with it, but just mentioning it, that some Christians have said at times, ah, you know, this person hasn't come to Christ, or this person hasn't repented of their sin.

[35 : 38] Let's not, you know, just give palliative care, you know, to ignore this. Let's let them suffer the oath that God will bring them closer to Christ.

Yeah. Or closer. Yeah. That doesn't seem like a good... Yeah. Yeah. But I just mentioned that just makes things as complicated as...

That's right, just to add another complicated level on a complicated issue, yeah. Yeah, should calculations of someone's conversion play into how we treat end-of-life issues.

I think that's very difficult, you know. Yeah, I wouldn't be very persuaded to place a lot of stock in that because God...

Ultimately, God is sovereign in salvation. He uses the means. He uses creaturely means to bring that about, but I think our job in those instances is to honor someone and to honor God as best we can and please God and not to think, well, if I do this, it might produce this outcome in them spiritually, right?

[36 : 50] The other thing is, too, is we don't know what's happening in someone's mind and heart when they're on their deathbed, when they're in their dying moments. You know, it's so hard to know what they're understanding, what they're not understanding, you know?

I think being with loved ones or friends or neighbors as they're dying, praying for them, sharing Christ for them, even if we don't know if they're awake or hearing us, I don't think those are lost efforts.

You know, in previous cultures and generations, you know, it's interesting in our culture of death and dying today, it's very rare that someone will die surrounded by their family and friends.

They're often separated from these things, but that has not always been the case. often we accompany our dying loved ones, we accompany them to the grave and we accompany them into heaven with singing, with support, with presence, right?

We're there with them. So, anyway, I'm rambling now, but yeah, I would hesitate to play God with someone's conversion when we're talking about end of life, but I would certainly not cease to sow good seeds in those moments of love and prayer and gospel words.

[38 : 09] Yeah. Yeah? I sense the kind of, like, internal contradiction or tension in a secular worldview of death where it seems like there's this simultaneous fear of death, desire to put unending effort toward extending life with massive intervention to add on a few more months or even completely disrupting the elderly ability to see loved ones, like the COVID, for example, the COVID extending a few more years.

Yeah. But that seems to be in tension with this view of dignity. Yeah. And I wonder what you think about that. Oh, yeah.

I kind of wonder if one led to the other and it's sort of... Yeah, it's a really good observation. And I sense that, too. And I think that, you know, there's a theologian and Christian philosopher named John Frame who would often say that, you know, any worldview outside of the biblical worldview will eventually, whether it ends in rationalism or other, will eventually get to a place of irrationality.

And I think that's actually what we see when it comes to sort of secular approaches to death. On the one hand, it's something to be avoided at all costs, but then you see at the same time an effort to kind of normalize and naturalize it, right?

It's just natural. It's passing on. It's, again, all these sort of non-Christian theologizing, really, about what death is and what it means.

[39 : 53] And they don't actually harmonize, right? They don't. I think there are deep contradictions there. And I think that's where Christianity can come in and say, do you see this tension, right, in your own thinking?

Let me share with you how I think about those things and how my belief in God and in Jesus Christ actually kind of treats that a little differently and maybe actually makes a little more sense, right?

That the reason why we recoil against death is because it's not the way life was intended to be. That God didn't create us as humans to die, that that's an intrusion into the good, right?

So, yes, our visceral reaction against death is there's something right there, right? And yet, Christianity also comes and says, but in order to approach death with courage, we don't actually have to normalize it or naturalize it, right?

We can say actually that God's acted in a way such that death isn't the end. So, there may be opportunities to witness to Christ there, to evangelize there, as we find those kind of fractures in the thinking of our friends and our neighbors, trying to hold together these deep questions within a world, do they can't actually hold them without deep contradiction.

[41 : 21] Another example where I saw this in some preparation for this morning, in language of freedom, right, around these issues of choice. It's very interesting. I spent some time looking at that campaign in the United Kingdom that was arguing for that assisted suicide bill, and so much of the language on their website was basically, we have to give people the freedom to choose to end their life.

Otherwise, they'll be forced to end their lives in awful, undignified ways. Well, isn't that interesting? So, we have to give people freedom because if we don't give them the freedom, they'll be forced to do something, right?

So, they don't have freedom. They're totally enslaved, so we have to give them freedom, but giving that freedom means they die. It's so contradictory, right?

And of course, you can see that it's just, it's, at one level, it's just fear slogans, right? Like, you don't want someone to end in this poor way, so you have to agree with us and give them this, but even the rationality falls apart, right?

So, if someone has freedom, then they should have freedom to not go down those terrible paths, right? That there are other options than these that we've kind of narrowed it into.

[42 : 40] Yeah, Beth, did you want to add to that? Well, I think sometimes there's a temptation as Christians to think everything's a slippery slope or to think, like, to put ourselves in a culture war on minor things, but for this one, it feels like a gen, you explained it well, but it feels like a genuine slippery slope.

Yeah, yeah. because when you start to take subjective things and put objective medical patient care conversation in place, it can get really just twisted really quickly.

Yeah. I think people have seen that in conversations in responses to ultrasounds and second level more detailed ultrasounds if there's a complication in utero.

immediately, it's like, well, let me, I have to lay out your options and there's always sort of a presented bias and then it puts the pressure on the patient to, like, really weigh the options almost on equal footing and I think ethically, in terms of biblical ethics, it's like, when you do this to end of life, I thought you exposed well that within the dignity avenue there is the shame element.

Yeah. And then there's this sort of subjective thing of like, how much suffering is too much suffering. Yeah. And then you, like, what does that do to the landscape of mental health?

[44 : 09] Yeah. Yeah. And I think it just, I think it's just a sort of devastating, like you said, door that has swung open. Yeah. because all of a sudden it feels like the, it feels like it might affirm the really dark, destructive work of spiritual darkness that like, to affirm a person's already sense of worthlessness or burden or unlovability or what is there.

and I think that that as Christians, like, for us to speak up and have a sense of like, unity and rally against those who are already suffering is so important.

Yeah. Yeah. You know. Yeah. That's well said, Beth. Yeah. Tom. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah, that's right. Yeah. Right. That's right. Yeah.

Yeah. Yeah. Right. Yeah.

[45 : 41] Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. And so much of the work, so much of the legislation now that's being proposed really tries to say, no, no, no, no, no. This is just in extreme circumstances. This is just for the terminally ill. We're going to put as many kind of guardrails and definitions around it as we can.

But you're right. I am persuaded by what you're saying, Tom, that even though they sound objective at first, they do feel a bit arbitrary. What is stopping from just the next step over, right?

Who's going to define what is an unbearable situation? And especially when we're making those arguments on the basis of human autonomy, who are you to say that my pain is not unbearable?

Right? It just, I do, I do think we need to be just very, very cautious here. Yeah. Yeah.

Yeah. I, I'm wondering kind of on the other extreme of things, like how much as Christians we should have like antipathy towards like death.

[46 : 54] Because, you know, assisted suicide, I think we all have like kind of like an inclination against that. Yeah. But on the other side of things, we have this kind of phenomenon in the tech world going on right now, like transhumanism.

Oh, yeah. Which is where we hate death so much. Yep. Overcoming by. Yeah. It's kind of science and materialistic. Yeah. So, on the one hand, we don't want the medical field to help people die.

Right. But on the other hand, how much do we want the medical field to try to help people? And of course, this is only going on like the top 0.1% right now. Sure. But assuming we can, you know, the medical education will trickle down.

How much do we want the medical field to extend life for everyone? Does that make any sense? Oh, it makes total sense, you know. And that's why this class needed to be 16 weeks, not eight weeks. Really good point.

There is the other extreme where, as humans, can we take it into our own hands to say, no, we will use whatever means possible to extend physical life as long as possible, regardless of the cost, regardless of the kind of creaturely boundaries we have to break in order to do it.

[48 : 01] You know? So, and I think there's also a very dangerous thing we're stepping into there. And also, I will say that I could be wrong about this.

I'm not a tech guru, obviously. But if I were to take all of your mental processes, translate them into ones and zeros, and present a big stack of paper with your everything that is in your brain in a big stack of papers and ones and zeros, that is not human life.

Right? So some of these dreams of like uploading myself into a database and then I'll live forever. However, I, again, from our perspective, they seem pretty far-fetched.

But I think there's also like definitionally that's not what it means to be human. Right? And that's where so much of these questions get to on this transhumanism front is, what does it mean to be human?

And not, here's the other thing too, not just what are we able to do? Right? Right? Because technology, we're able to do all sorts of things. Right? AI is another good question. Right? Like we can do all sorts of things or AI can do all sorts of things.

[49 : 09] Right? But what sort of people do we want to become? Right? Do we want to create a culture where we're just extending people's life indefinitely in the face of the fact that, look, humans are only going to live 80, 90, 100 years.

And there does come a point where, again, we see this in Scripture, where we have to embrace the fact that God is sovereign and we will die. And the goal is not to avoid death forever, but to be ready for death when it comes.

And to see in Christ the ultimate answer to our spiritual death and our eternal death. And that one day he will even conquer our physical death. Right?

But that's where our hope lies. So, yeah, there's so many issues here that are so well raised. But you're right. Yeah. Okay, one more. Richard, you get the last word. Perhaps some of you remember the old saying, come grow old with me, the best is yet to be.

But Jesus invites us, come suffer with me, the best is yet to be. Yeah. Yeah. Well said. Yeah.

[50 : 24] Yeah. Yeah. There's the title of the sword to take death. Death. That's right. That's right. That's right. Sorry for the heavy weight this morning, friends.

You know? J.R.R. Tolkien was asked one time, oh, Tolkien, what's the Lord of the Rings all about? You know, you wrote this massive fantasy novel. How would you sum it up?

And he said, well, it's about what all mythologies and all great mythologies are about. It's about death. So, we're talking a lot about death this morning. But, hey, we're also talking about death in light of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Right? So, we do not grieve as those who have no hope. And we also know that death is a defeated enemy. Enemy though he is. So, all right, friends. Let me pray.

And then we'll head upstairs. Father, thank you. Oh, for this class. Lord, we've dipped into such heavy matters, such weighty things, such sobering topics. Lord, there's been so much cause for reflection, for grief and lament at times.

[51 : 26] And yet, not without hope, God. Lord, we trust that having walked through your word again when it comes to life and its value and its gift. God, I pray that we would be strengthened again to live for you, to trust you, to go forth with courage and joy, knowing that your ways are good, that you are the God of life, that you offer us indestructible life in Jesus, your son.

And you promise one day to take all death and dying and sorrow and wipe it away and make all things new. Lord, help us to be that kind of hopeful, resilient, loving people, courageous, even in the face of suffering, even in the face of dying, because of your deep love for us.

What indeed can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord, you say, Father? Nothing. Not even death itself. We thank you and praise you for that. In Jesus' name, amen.