



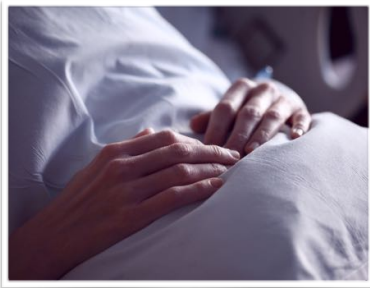
Dear Praying Friends in Europe,

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

Paul wrote that eternal life is God’s gift. But the only way to enter this eternal life is death. Because the “wages of sin is death”. Sin and death are coupled together. But Jesus bore our sins and died our death. By faith we become united to Christ in his death and resurrection. Being one with Jesus, the victory of his death has become our way to eternal life. These beliefs about death have strong implications. We need to recognise that dying is inevitable and that human choices have eternal consequences.

Euthanasia and assisted suicide

The Bible’s teaching on death and eternal life are clear. Can this teaching help us to address the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide? What people believe about their afterlife will influence to some extent what they think about euthanasia and assisted suicide. If death is the ultimate end, then euthanasia might be an attractive solution if life has become too hard.



First, we need to be clear about what is euthanasia and assisted suicide? Euthanasia means being killed by a physician and assisted suicide is being helped (by a doctor) to kill oneself. When a mentally fully controlled person refuses nutrition or life-saving medical treatment, that is not

euthanasia. Equally when a physician withholds or withdraws a medical treatment because it may not bring relief of suffering or extend life, that is also not euthanasia.

Thus, it is important to make a clear distinction between killing a person and letting someone die, which means not to interfere with a process that is already taking place. The sixth commandment “*You shall not murder*” (Exodus 20:13) prohibits any act that would intentionally take the life of another person. This prohibition against murder applies to all people, including the terminally ill. In most European countries, euthanasia and assisted suicide are both still illegal. But there is an increasing pressure to change the law, mainly on the basis of some extreme cases of terminally ill patients, which have been brought to the courts and were highlighted in the media.

If a nation will allow physician-assisted suicide, there is a danger that the right to die can over time move to the belief in society that there

is an obligation to die. For example, there could be a pressure on the elderly and severely ill people that they drain large resources from the already limited health care system.

For the past 20 years, Belgium has had a liberal law on physician-assisted suicide, which is not just for the terminally ill. Patients with psychiatric conditions including depression can also request euthanasia.

A suicidal tendency requiring psychiatric treatment must receive sufficient protection, especially for people with mental illnesses. There is a danger that too many people end their lives rather than have the care that they require to live.

Many Christians today are not convinced that euthanasia is wrong in all circumstances. Some Christians argue that it can sometimes be justified because God’s law bows to God’s love. This view implies that God’s law may be suspended by the higher principle of loving others. This viewpoint contradicts Jesus’ teaching. “*Whoever sets aside one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:19)

The best argument against this view is compassionate medical care addressing the needs of dying patients by management of pain and other symptoms, and by providing psychological and spiritual support.

Prayer points

- Pray that attempts to legalise euthanasia and assisted suicide in European countries (e.g. Italy, France, Germany, UK) will fail
- Pray for a strong commitment of Christian churches to warn that legalising euthanasia will have damaging consequences
- Pray for a strengthening and increased financial support of palliative care by politicians and health care providers

Migrants stranded at sea

France has reluctantly agreed to receive the 234 migrants who have been stranded on board a rescue boat for 19 days in the latest row between the new Italian government and humanitarian NGOs. Italy has only allowed partial and selective disembarkation from other rescue ships, causing some migrants to remain on board with their future in jeopardy.

The Italian authorities have been accused of not respecting the international law of the sea, with a European Commission spokesperson saying “There is both a legal and moral duty to save lives at sea [...] and to do so independently from the circumstances which have led people to be in distress at sea.”

This is just the latest chapter in a long running story which as yet has no easy solutions. Let’s pray for all the parties involved.

Additional Prayer Points:-

1. The Ukraine-Russia war is expected to continue for a long time, but God can change things quickly. Pray for a sudden shift that brings the war to an end.
2. Corruption is a big problem in some countries and always a risk in others. Pray for all politicians who are saying no to corruption. May they prosper and flourish.

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