

Hot Topics

Abortion
Psalm 82:3, 4

With Study Questions

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**Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. ⁴
Deliver the poor and needy; Free *them* from the hand of the wicked
(Psalm 82:3, 4).**

Introduction

In June I will have been the pastor of this church for thirty-three years. In those thirty-three years, there has been only one thing that has remained in our bulletin the entire time. It reads:

We believe God's Moral law to be active still and the basis for all good civic law; to depart from it rebelliously is to invite moral and civil disaster' 1 John 3:4, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness." We are Pro-Life, and understand abortion to be the taking of an innocent life.

January 22nd would have marked the 50th anniversary of 1973 Roe v. Wade, the landmark Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion nationwide. I was a senior in high school. Of course, on June 24th, 2022, that decision was overturned. The overturning of Roe v. Wade did not make abortion illegal but grants individual states the power to set their own abortion laws.

Nonetheless, since 1973, we have aborted roughly sixty million babies in the U.S. alone. It is without a doubt, the greatest sin and tragedy of my generation. I don't think there is a close second.

The organization that has been most opportunistic regarding Roe v. Wade has been Planned Parenthood. One of our former staff members, who now ministers in the south, commented on our nation's past celebrations of the Roe v. Wade decision with these words:

Don't get confused about it. Planned Parenthood is a \$1.5 billion-dollar taxpayer funded abortion corporation. It is

essentially a for profit state enterprise that performs homicides upon American infants for a modest fee. If you do not like your child, and it hasn't been born quite yet, they will kill it, remove it from your body and dispose of it for you. It is the most neat, cold, clean, heartless, soulless, inhuman, terrifying, bestial bit of murder ever devised by humankind. There has never been anything quite like it, not for a lack of trying through all human history. This is it; the darkest night of our historical soul and we celebrate it as if it were a sacrament, holding it up to the daylight as if it were evidence of our great commitment to humanity.¹

The Pulpit and Politics

It should not surprise us that the world would resist a sermon dedicated to exposing this foul practice of abortion, but it might be surprising to some that many Christians will grumble at a sermon with such political undercurrents. It is frequently argued that the pulpit is no place for this.

Though I agree that the pulpit should herald, above all things, the gospel of Jesus Christ and His resurrection, there are times when there is such a prevailing evil in a culture that it must be addressed. If not the church, then who? Consider the words of German theologian and Lutheran pastor, Martin Niemoller who had been imprisoned for opposing Hitler:

In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. They came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.

I will spend the next few moments speaking up. Prayerfully, I will speak with sensitivity, rationality, integrity and soundness of thought. I will somewhat rapidly address common arguments, leaving you to decide

¹ Pastor Christopher Neiswonger

at what level, and in what manner, you would speak up yourself. We will close with whether or not God grants a path back from this heinous transgression.

Common Arguments

Beginning of Life

One of the most common arguments for abortion on demand is the argument about when life begins. At dinner with a med-school student who viewed my pro-life position as sophomoric, the gentleman made strident appeals to science. He thought it would be a rapid end to the discussion when he referenced heartbeats and brainwaves as the definitive standard of life.

Leaving for now that the unborn baby's heart begins to beat at twenty-two days and brainwaves are detectable at six weeks (often before women even know they're pregnant), I was surprised at how caught off guard my almost-doctor friend was when he was asked, "Why do you think those things qualify as a standard for human life?" One thing we learn in this dialogue is that when we give up epistemology (the theory of knowledge-how we know what we know), we have given up the farm.

The list of what constitutes life (human life) goes on. As if pulling it out of a hat, the arguments for when life begins include: *Sentience* (aware of one's own self-existence). How could you possibly know if someone else is sentient? *Viability* or *independence* (the ability to exist on one's own). But if viability is the standard for humanity, this excludes newborn (and not so newborn) babies as well. There is no shortage in the documentation of history of cultures/nations taking this nasty step from the unborn to the newly born. We are currently dancing with that ourselves.

Even many of my pro-life colleagues (and I don't altogether disagree with them) urge the education of the populous regarding the very human qualities which appear at startling early stages of fetal development, things like fingerprints, spinal cords, the development of eyes and so forth.

But this too falls short, for it fails to posit any authoritative, objective criteria – we're left with the empty slogan often used to define pornography (or if you're Alan Dershowitz – used to define immorality) "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it." Plan on an eternal argument if

our answers concerning such weighty questions are sought from the medical, philosophical, political, or entertainment-based communities.

Even when a former president was asked if abortion was the taking of an innocent life, he answered that it was above his paygrade. Yet he governed as if he knew the answer to that question. He spoke as if he didn't know but ruled as if he did.

But there are no matters that above God's paygrade. He has spoken to us in His word. And the Scriptures are not unclear on the issue. David referred to himself as a sinner at conception (Psalm 51:5). Mere cell clusters are not sinners. Luke uses the same word (*brephos*) in reference to John the Baptist while in his mother's womb (Luke 1:41) as he uses in reference to the baby Jesus lying in a manger (Luke 2:12). Exodus 21:22 offers words of protection for a baby within the mother's womb. Of course, all of this brings us to the second objection.

Religion and Politics

Keeping religion out of politics is a sacred mantra among those who support the killing of the unborn. It is the step-brother of keeping politics out of the pulpit. I have no desire for there to be a state-run church or a church-run state (which is the basis of the separation of church and state). No one is arguing for a government sanctioned Church of America (against the Church of England).

But what do people mean when they protest that you're seeking to impose your religion upon an unwilling populace? There must be some knowable source for our immaterial convictions that govern the ethos of a society.

The real question is "To whom are we all willing to kneel?" To the doctors? lawyers? politicians? sophists? poets? Rock stars? A thousand Frenchmen? Who gets to be god? It may initially appear convenient to seek to extract the one living Triune God who has revealed His will and wisdom in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, but now we're left with the daunting task of picking a new god as the arbiter of human affairs. Secularists may not refer to it quite that way, but that's merely semantics.

In all of our studies of the transgressions of the Israelites in the Old Testament, one of the conclusions we see in repeated fashion is how the worshiping of false gods (or even the true God in a false way) inevitably

led to, among other things, the sacrifice of the children (Leviticus 18:21; 20:2; 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chronicles 33:6, etc.). At its heart, this whole enterprise becomes an evangelistic issue.

I am offering my opinion that it would be the greatest blessing for our country that our God (since it is of necessity that we pick one) should be the maker of heaven and earth, God the Father Almighty and Jesus Christ His only Son, Our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit. This is the only hope. There is no doubt in my mind that the healing of our nation (all nations) when it comes to the abortion (and other moral) issue, will only happen if the Gospel is preached and believed.

We are not saved by good laws or bad laws. Good laws are the fruit of our salvation, not the cause.

Other Objections

There are numerous other objections which go beyond the pale of a single sermon. If the unborn baby is not truly a baby, all of the objections are worth a hearty look and consideration, but if the unborn baby is truly a baby, none of these objections are sufficient to kill it.

Financial Hardship

Financial hardship is real. It is very possible that a child will be born into a less than optimal economic environment. If the unborn is merely an appendix or a fingernail, this would be a valid consideration. But you don't terminate your baby because you can't pay your bills. The same can be said for absentee dads. For a man to abandon his responsibilities surrounding his offspring is wrong, a sin. But you don't execute a child because of his/her parent's sin.

Reproductive Rights

You will often hear of reproductive rights. To be sure, the government should not micromanage who we marry or how many children we choose to have. But once the baby exists, we have now reproduced, and that baby has rights. In a secondary sense, those rights should be protected by the government. Primarily, the right to live comes from God according to the Sixth Commandment.

Death Penalty

Another objection is aimed at the apparent inconsistency coming from the pro-life constituency. I was accused of this myself many years ago by Tony Campolo (a very popular, left leaning member of the evangelical community). “The problem with people like you,” he said while poking his finger in my chest, “was that you are pro-life but also for the death penalty.” Talk-show host, Larry King, offered the same objection.

Two quick responses: That I am wrong in one issue, doesn't mean I am wrong in the other. We are all full of many inconsistencies (though we try to avoid them if possible). If we all have to be correct in everything, then none of us will be right in anything! Having said that, if there is any example of the fall of man crushing our rationality and bringing us to the level of a “debased” mind (Romans 1:28), it is here.

I was so shocked to hear this objection, I could hardly find words, so I merely said what seemed so obvious that I was suspecting we were just missing something in our dialogue. My simple response was, “Yes, I think convicted murderers deserve the death penalty and innocent babies should be protected.”

Unwed Mothers

Another objection is that pro-life people may want to save babies, but are they willing to care for them once they're born? Again, we have the same fallacious thinking. That I happen to be negligent when it comes to child-care does not mean that I am wrong when it comes to protecting the innocent from being put to death. Having said that, the (primarily) Christian community which lobbies in the pro-life direction has done more to help unwed mothers than any other community in America. It is simply a false accusation.

Rape and Incest

One of the most compelling objections revolves around instances of rape and incest. This is without doubt an intensely difficult issue. Something horrible has happened and we do not want to exacerbate the

issue. Abortion seems like the easiest answer. Again, two responses: Abortion is not an easy answer. Many women who have had them only came to fully realize at a later time what they had done, which was kill their baby (It really is remarkable what a culture can produce in us). Now they carry two horrible memories instead of one. Also (and this needs to be said as delicately as possible, but it is truth), we don't kill a child because of the crime of his/her parent.

Women's Health

The calculated euphemisms surrounding abortion are many. "Pro-choice" was a very clever platform, as is "women's health." Regarding the latter, it is argued that to criminalize abortion will send women back into back alleys and unsafe environments to have the procedure take place. Again, if the baby is truly human, then this is an insufficient argument.

But it must simply be stated that far more women have died from abortions since Roe v. Wade than in the preceding times when it was illegal. Not due to incompetency but sheer numbers. For when it gets right down to it, abortion has become a form of birth control.

Men

The list of objections goes on. Some have, no doubt, tuned me out because men shouldn't have a say on this issue. But it is absurd to suggest that a person's sex disqualifies them from protecting babies. That would be similar to saying I have no right to oppose slavery because I am not black. Add to that that there is a significantly higher percentage of women who believe abortion is wrong than men. There is nothing I have said that has not been said by many women.

Caution

Again, all of these objections might have some merit if the baby is not truly human. But if the baby is truly human, none of them do. But what if you're on the fence? Though a weaker argument, there is something to be said to err on the side of caution. If I am driving down the road and see a stroller on the freeway (but can't see if it contains a child), I will choose to avoid hitting it, just in case.

Difficult Decision

It is often said that pro-lifers are insensitive because they're butting into a woman who is in the midst of a difficult decision. I recall listening to a debate where the head of Planned Parenthood chastised her opponents for this transgression. But the pro-life member of the panel asked a simple question that the president of Planned Parenthood couldn't seem to answer, "Why is it difficult?"

It's not difficult to decide to get your appendix out or a tooth pulled. I was startled in this debate to hear this woman finally admit that she knew the unborn child was a baby. But it didn't matter. No, this has reached a particularly dark level as evidenced by the widespread legalization of abortions in the third trimester where there is no doubt in anyone's mind that we have a fully developed baby.

Don't Interfere

People say it is not their place to interfere. This is a decision between a woman and her doctor. Again, if it is not a human this might make sense. But if you were walking through the park and saw a woman and her doctor abusing her one-year-old would you not interfere? Would you be held back if the woman and her doctor told you they didn't consider the toddler to be a human?

Image of God

Perhaps you're saying to yourself, 'Pastor, you're overstating the issue. The toddlers are perfectly safe. That would never happen. It's ridiculous.' Consider the words of nuclear physicist, Winston C. Duke:

A philosophy of reason will define a human being as life which demonstrates self-awareness, volition and rationality. Thus it should be recognized that not all men are human.... It would seem ... to be more inhumane to kill an adult chimpanzee than a newborn baby, since the chimpanzee has greater mental awareness.

But people are not, as theologian and philosopher, Edward Carnell has said, a mere “grown up germ.”² People are made in the image of God, every last one of us in our **“mother’s womb...fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:13, 14)**. We are to be protected because we are made in the **“image of God” (Genesis 9:6)**. How unlike the words of Oliver Wendell Holmes,

I see no reason for attributing to man a significance in kind different from that which belongs to a baboon or a grain of sand.³

That this is no small issue can be extracted from a brief list our God gives us of things that are particularly heinous in His eyes. In the midst of that list are **“Hands that shed innocent blood” (Proverbs 6:17)**. That we are not to remain motionless on such issues are found in the words of the Psalmist,

Defend the poor and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and needy. ⁴ Deliver the poor and needy; Free *them* from the hand of the wicked (Psalm 82:3, 4).

The means by which the defense of the most needy people imaginable (unborn babies) takes place is its own message. Our church offers a vehicle for those interested. But I would like to finish with words of redemption.

The Road Back

Is there a road back for those who have willingly participated or encouraged this behavior? The answer is a resounding ‘yes’. Perhaps the greatest chapter in all of Scripture addressing forgiveness was penned by David who was a great culprit of murder and sexual immorality. David acknowledged his transgression and the Lord blotted out all of his iniquities.

² And the logical consequence of pessimistic philosophy and evolution is this from Sproul, “If our origin is accidental and insignificant and our destiny is annihilation, isn’t it absurd to believe that we might have some significance in between?” 19

³ Sproul, R. C.. Abortion: A Rational Look at an Emotional Issue (Kindle Locations 633-634).

In this very thorny issue, we would be remiss as teachers of the word to ignore the heinous nature of this great sin. At the same time, we would be negligent as ambassadors for Christ to ignore the blessing of forgiveness and reconciliation given to those who call upon His Name (2 Corinthians 5:20). It is biblically, briefly and powerfully stated in our confession.

As there is no sin so small, but it deserves damnation; so there is no sin so great, that it can bring damnation upon those who truly repent.⁴

Or as we read in Isaiah:

Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon (Isaiah 55:7).

⁴ WCF, 15, 4.

Questions for Study

1. Should churches address political issues? What is the value or danger of this?
2. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the common arguments for when life begins. Does the Bible address this issue?
3. How would you respond if someone told you to keep your religion out of politics when it comes to the abortion issue?
4. What are some other objections when it comes to the pro-life position? Are these objections valid? Explain.
5. In what respect is human life unique?
6. How can you speak up when it comes to the abortion issue?
7. Is there a road back for those who have had or encouraged abortion? What does that road look like?