

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 1/30/94 PM
Proverbs 24:10-12 "The Church's Responsibility When Life is Violated"

Intro:

According to Loren Cunningham, "The safest place to be in this country, per population group, is on Death Row." It has also been said that the most dangerous place on earth to be is in your mother's womb where you have a 60% chance of surviving! Indeed, an ice-trapped whale elicits more sympathy than an unwelcome baby!

Is abortion merely a political matter? Is it solely a private matter that should be kept between a woman and her doctor?

Last week, we learned from Scripture that it is not. We asked the question: "What makes life sacred?" We investigated God's Word to see what God thinks of the unborn child. We considered Job's testimony.

Transp: Job 10:8-12

Here's what Job said happened in the womb. Here's what Job said God did for him before he was born:

v 8 Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me round about.

v 9 Thou hast made me as the clay.

v 11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh

v 11 and hast fenced me (NIV "knit me together")with bones and sinews

v 12 "Thou has granted me life and favor {When? In the womb!}, and thy care hath preserved my SPIRIT {When did God preserve Job's spirit? In the womb}.

What makes life sacred? For the Christian, it boils down to one thing. God says that He created man in His very image. That fact sets us apart from the animal kingdom. That fact makes it inconceivable for us to view the unborn child merely as a piece of tissue in its mother, or as a "thing." As a church, our attitude towards the unborn is not to be determined by public opinion polls, and certainly not by our feelings, but by the absolute declarations of our Creator God.

Having said that, we need to ask an important question.

What is the church's responsibility when the sanctity of life is being violated? What's our responsibility as individual Christians? Do we have a responsibility when 1.5 million unborn children are murdered every year in this nation?

To answer this, let's turn to Prov 24.

Proposition: Proverbs 24:10-12 makes it clear that God has given us a responsibility to help the helpless.

I. Three Excuses God will NOT accept:

A. Excuse #1--Intimidation "I'm only one person. What can I do?"

v 10 "If you faint..." (NIV "falter")

B. Excuse #2--Indifference: "I don't want to get involved."

v 11 "If you forbear..."

- C. Excuse #3--Ignorance: "I didn't know. I had no idea this was happening."
v 12 "If you say we knew it not..."
- II. Three Reasons God says these excuses are Flimsy (12):
 - A. Reason #1--He knows our heart.
v 12 "He weighs the heart..."
 - B. Reason #2--He helps us.
v 12 "He that keepeth thy soul..."
 - C. Reason #3--He rewards action, not intentions!
v 12 "And shall He not render to every man according to his works?"

Context: Proverbs

Proverbs is God's wisdom book. He gave it to us to show us how to live a wise life. Proverbs shows us what wisdom looks like in living color, in real life situations.

Commentator Allen Ross says ch 24 is part of a larger section entitled "The Sayings of the Wise" which begins at 22:17, and goes through 24:34.

22:17 "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise"

As the NIV puts it, v 17 begins the "sayings of the wise." There are 30 precepts, 30 sayings of the wise man, that follow. Our focus is on the 24th saying. It has to do with Justice.

READ 24:10-12

Notice the repetition: If thou...if thou...if thou. God places a premium on justice. So must we, if we are to be wise. When it comes to justice, there are 3 excuses God will not accept.

I. Three Excuses God will NOT accept:

- A. Excuse #1--Intimidation "I'm only one person. What can I do?"
v 10 "If you faint..." (NIV "falter")

V 10 "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small."

We never know our strength until we're put into a situation that demands a lot from us! The test of a real man is what he does, not when things go well, not the generous things he does when it's convenient, but what he does in times of adversity. When there's risk involved. When it might cost him something.

And not just when it's our own adversity...

V 11 "If thou forbear to deliver those who are drawn unto death"

What do you do when you learn that someone else is in danger? What do you do when you find out someone's life is in jeopardy, especially someone who is helpless to protect himself/herself?

Do you say, "What can I do? I'm only one person. I can't make a difference. I'm too insignificant. I'm just an ordinary person."?

We've all felt that way, haven't we? The moral decay is so rampant around us. There is so much injustice, our tendency is to throw up our hands and say, "What's the use?!"

Think of the problem of abortion. It's natural to say, "The problem's too big, and I'm too small. I can't make a difference." Martin Luther said, "He is not strong who is not firm in need." (Keil, 130).

Listen. The first excuse that God does not accept from us is Intimidation.

B. Excuse #2--Indifference: "I don't want to get involved."

v 11 "If you forbear..."

V 11 "If thou forbear..."

NIV "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter." God holds us responsible for rescuing those who are in danger.

Surely there's a principle here that applies to lots of different scenarios. Does God hold us accountable to do something about starving children in third world countries? Does He expect us to take action when we learn that innocent children are the victims of abuse?

God abhors indifference. Yet the words that most accurately describe the attitude of our hearts so often are these, "I don't want to get involved."

That's an unacceptable excuse to God.

C. Excuse #3--Ignorance: "I didn't know. I had no idea this was happening."

v 12 "If you say we knew it not..."

This was a tragic excuse during the holocaust of the Jews in WWII. "We had no idea Hitler was doing that to the Jews."

Friends, we are responsible. God's not impressed with excuses. Whether intimidation, or indifference, or ignorance. I fear that the scene of judgment will be a sober one for us, when we stand before our Lord, and give account.

In the 6th commandment, God said, "Thou shalt not murder." Many years ago, Martin Luther pointed out that we can violate this command by omission as well as commission. Here's what he wrote:

"Not only is that person guilty of violating this commandment who does the evil that it forbids, but also the one who fails to take the opportunity to do good to his neighbor and who, though able to prevent evil and to protect, shield, and save the neighbor from injury and bodily harm, fails to do so...If you see someone condemned to die or in similar peril and fail to rescue him, although you know ways and means of doing so, then you have killed him...For you did withhold your love from him and robbed him of the help that might have saved his life." (McGoldrick, "God or Caesar?", 7)

Tran: Those are the excuses God does not accept from us. Why not?

II. Three Reasons God says these excuses are Flimsy (12):

A. Reason #1--He knows our heart.

v 12 "He weighs the heart..."

God is omniscient. He knows. He knows that often our lack of knowledge is merely a cover-up for apathy. Ignorance is no excuse for us.

B. Reason #2--He helps us.

v 12 "He that keepeth thy soul..."

God helps us. If He helps us out of His mercy, ought we not help those who can't help themselves?

C. Reason #3--He rewards action, not intentions!

v 12 "And shall He not render to every man according to his works?"

All of us would do well to read frequently Solomon's conclusion in Eccl 12:13-14, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commands...For God shall bring every work into judgment..."

God rewards action, not intentions.

Application:

James McGoldrick, in his booklet, "God or Caesar?," concludes: "It should be clear by this point that the Christian's duty goes beyond mere disapproval of abortion. If he is to discharge his obligation of love for his neighbor, he must actively employ means to stop the destruction of life..."

What should we do as Christians to uphold the sanctity of life? There are a variety of answers to that question. The following diagram represents a host of different responses towards the violation of unborn life:

The options...

- Nothing: "It's none of my business."
- Pray
- Get involved in the political process (write letters, vote)
- Offer Alternatives to abortion (Crisis Pregnancy Center)
- Picket abortion clinics
- Bomb abortion clinics
- Murder doctors who perform abortions

Obviously, not all of these options are biblical. What should we do as Christians to uphold the sanctity of life?

Challenge: What's the real problem that we face?

Someone says, "The real problem is we need to overturn "Roe v. Wade." Is that it? No. The real problem is deeper than a constitutional ruling.

Another says, "The problem is to eliminate unwanted pregnancies." True, but that' merely a symptom of a much deeper problem.

Another says, "The real problem is people's attitude towards life. If we can prove to everyone that the unborn child is a person, then they'll stop the abortions. Won't they?" No. Though that would help, the real problem is not people's attitude towards life.

What's the real problem? The real problem is people's attitude towards...God. Depraved men are alienated from God. They reject God. They hate the God of the Bible. They have forsaken His authority, and His absolutes, and have gone there own way. The problem is SIN. Sinful man cannot please God. Sinful men don't want to please God. They want to please themselves. They want to do their own thing. And the tragedy is that sin enslaves them. They are trapped by their sin. They think they are free, but they are in bondage. That's the real problem.

Key question: What's the solution to THAT problem?

The solution is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Key: The most effective deterrent to abortion is the gospel. The most effective method we can implement to stop abortion is to make disciples.

Why? Because a disciple of Christ who's walking in the steps of Christ will yield His will to the authority of Christ. And when that happens, abortion will not even be a consideration.

Problem: Some churches, though sincere, have done harm to the gospel by becoming known as an "issue-oriented" church. An "issue-oriented" church is known in the community, not as a group committed to the gospel, but as a group that fights for an issue(s). Instead of being seen as people who follow Christ, its members are seen by the unsaved world as people who oppose issues.

eg--"Oh, that's the church where you don't wear pants..."

eg--"Yea, they're the ones who don't use musical instruments..."

eg--"1st Church? You mean that church that hates abortionists."

Don't misunderstand me. We need to have convictions. And stand for them. But our mission is a positive one, not a negative one. We are here to make disciples of Christ.

We must never lose sight that there's a real danger in becoming known merely as an "issue-oriented" church. Having said that, let's be practical. We do have a responsibility.

Discuss:

What should we do as Christians to uphold the sanctity of life? What part would God have WBC to have in helping the helpless victims?

1. We need to teach the absolutes of God's Word. (II Tim 4:2-3)
2. We must model the love of Christ for an onlooking world. (Jn 13:34)
3. We must pray:

--for spiritual awakening in our land
--for our civil leaders (I Tim 2:1-2)

4. We must use the opportunities God gives us as individuals to help the needy.
eg--Nurses, Teachers, and others could explore opportunities to explain alternatives to abortion to teens in schools
eg--Maternity Resource Center
eg--Explore ways to minister to women who have been through the trauma of an abortion.
5. Other?

Challenge: We can't afford to stand by idly. Over 4,100 children perish every day in America. May God give us wisdom. And may we remember the admonition of Edmund Burke, the great political philosopher and Christian activist in 18th century Britain, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing!"