

The New Testament Church
The Right to Life
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Life comes from God

The first verse of the Bible declares that all of creation comes from God. Genesis 1:1 – *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* But to be more specific, all human life comes from God as well. Genesis 2:7 - *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.* It is His breath in our lungs. We have a spirit designed to communicate with God, a soul (mind, will and emotion) that makes us unique among all creation, and a physical body; all crafted by God.

God gave men and women three great *responsibilities* on earth. The first was to “*be fruitful and multiply.*” (Genesis 1:28) This means the first right given by God to humanity was the right to life. But all rights come with responsibility. It is the responsibility of mankind to have children and multiply – we are to trust God that He made the earth easily capable of sustaining life. The *myth of over-population* should be discarded.¹ Life from the womb is sacred and significant.

The other two responsibilities were to “*replenish the earth*” or re-fill it with creative productivity which requires freedom. The right to *liberty* is derived from this injunction. Finally, the responsibility to “subdue the earth” is given, which is property ownership. To these rights were obviously given the responsibility to steward the earth and its resources. Thus, *life, liberty and property* were the first three rights and responsibilities given to mankind.

The God of Truth and Grace

We have declared that the nature of God is both power and wisdom, truth and grace, or the Word as graciously brought to us by the Holy Spirit. It is not one or the other, but both. If truth alone is emphasized, it can be difficult to swallow, and appear condemning. If grace alone is emphasized, we have no platform from which to repent or receive forgiveness from a loving God. The sad thing is that our society no longer sees life as valuable and worth protecting. Such a culture is a dying one and certain to face the judgment (correction) of the Creator.

But let us also remember that today’s topic is highly emotional. Our nation is very polarized. Each one of us in some way has been touched by the topic of life. The ultrasound image of a baby in the womb and the sound of its heartbeat touches our emotion and reinforces the fact that a baby in the womb is truly a human being. At the same time, those who have had abortions, or been complicit with them in some way, can be haunted by their past decisions.

As much as we must emphasize the truth, we must also embrace the grace to all for God forgives, cleanses, and can wipe our past clean. If you are here hurting and in pain when a topic

¹ See Rushdoony, R. J., *The Myth of Over-Population*, Craig Press, 1969.

such as this is discussed, please remember that God is a God of love, grace and forgiveness. Hebrews 8:12 declares - *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.*"

A picture of both truth and grace in graphic form is ancient Jerusalem's Valley of Hinnom. It is also known in English as Gehenna. Here the children of Israel, thousands of years ago, borrowing from practices of nations around them, had their children "pass through the fire" to the false god Molech.² This hideous act was an abomination to God to destroy children by fire to a false god after they were born.

No wonder Gehenna is translated as "hell." The images of the remains of children haunted the children of Israel and reached its peak during the time of King David, around 1,000 B.C. Yet, maybe David was referring to a valley such as this when he wrote in Psalm 23:5; "*yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*" This is because the same God that gives life, and asks that we respect and protect it, also gives grace to overcome the effects of our disobedience through the loving comfort of His grace.

We must ask how a godly nation such as Israel, who had been taught by God's Law that life was sacred and holy, stoop to such depths as to sacrifice their children in the most horrific way, staining the land with their innocent blood? Yet, here we are in America, and across the globe, doing the same, and often without any shame or conviction of conscience.

Jeremiah went to this very valley and declared in chapter 19:2-6; *Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; 'Behold, I will bring such a catastrophe on this place, that whoever hears of it, his ears will tingle. Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods... and have filled this place with the blood of the innocents... which I did not command or speak, nor did it come into My mind).* The nation that kills its young in essence fulfills Proverbs 8:36 - *he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.*

But at the same time, the same God who inspired Jeremiah to expose such horrific conduct also, at the beginning of his ministry, declared His willingness to forgive and pardon. God declared to Jeremiah in chapter 5, verse 1 - *Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem; see now and know; and seek in her open places, if you can find a man, if there is anyone who executes judgment, who seeks the truth, and I will pardon her.*" God is always ready to pardon at the first notion of conviction and repentance.

I remember studying in the archives of the Moody Center in Northampton many years ago reading some of Dwight Moody's sermons. I came across this quote; *I cannot preach on hell unless I preach with tears.* I was also moved years ago when reading through the many quotes of Corrie Ten Boom who experienced the depths of evil under the Nazi Regime's

² See Leviticus 18:21 - *...you shall not let any of your descendants pass through the fire to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.* See also Deuteronomy 18:10; 2nd Kings 17:47; Isaiah 57:5; and Jeremiah 7:31.

Concentration camp where her sister was killed. I was moved by her simple statement; *“there is no pit so deep where God’s love is not deeper still.”*

I have searched my heart today that I might handle this truth carefully before God. For if you are tempted to arise in anger toward those who support abortion, or arise in pride that you have not participated in it, encouraged it, or had an abortion yourself, you may not be ready to deal with this topic properly, for *truth must always be share in love and with mercy and grace*. 1st Corinthians 10:12 declares *Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*. We may be disgusted at the results of sin in our culture, but we are not to embrace pride that we are better than those we accuse; we must *take heed*.

Life Begins at Conception

So hear me out today, consider what the Bible says, and let God speak to you. Though I share my perspective from the Scriptures, it is God who confirms His truth, it is not merely reasoning or logic that does so. Also, ponder that a God so righteous is also the God so loving and forgiving, so compassionate, that there is always hope for all of us, and for our nation as well!

Psalm 51:5 states *in sin my mother conceived me.*” The sin nature of every human being is given at conception. Our soul and body begin at conception. It is interesting that God’s Word is always ahead of the confirmation of scientific discovery. Though the biological science of conception was not understand by David, the author of this Psalm, he was given revelation ahead of his time.

Jeremiah 1:5 states, *“Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.”* The very prophet who lamented at the valley of Hinnom was called *before he entered the womb of his mother*. Our calling predates our conception! And remember, the very Jeremiah who could declare such truth with the backdrop of such evil, was known as the *weeping prophet*, filled with grace. Humans are not just physical bodies, but we have a spirit with a calling from God, and a soul.

Psalm 100:3 says, *“It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves.”* We are not the owners of our lives, God is. He has called us, created us, and has a purpose for us. Rus Walton, former Executive Director of the Plymouth Rock Foundation, and my mentor, wrote, *“Pro-abortionists claim that terminating a pregnancy is not murder because the fetus is not a human life... Thus, the question: When does life begin? The Bible has always given the answer, and the more science learns through study and research, the more science affirms the Scriptures. Life begins at conception. When a zygote (“genesis” cell) is formed by the fusion of the sperm and the egg, life commences.”*³

Every life is the work of God’s Hand in the womb as described in Psalm 139:13-16; *For you formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the*

³ Walton, Rus., *Biblical Solutions to Contemporary Problems*, Plymouth Rock Foundation, 1989, pages 18-19.

lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed, and in your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.

Exodus 21:22-23 declares further; *If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life.*" Note that the child, if it does not die, still is worth the penalty as the husband (and wife) determine. However, if it does die, it is "life for life" or in other words equal to the life of an adult! God's Law considers the child in the womb to be a person.

Roe v. Wade; Now 50 years old

The now famous *Roe v. Wade* decision⁴ was rendered on January 22, 1973 by a 7 to 2 margin. Today, that decision turns 50. Since then, there have been over 63 million recorded abortions in the U.S.⁵ The highest number of abortions (93%) occur in the 1st Trimester. We can be thankful that over these years there has been a steady decline in the number of abortions per year since the peak of 1.5 million in 1991.

Also, the number of abortion providers has decreased steadily since its peak of 2,908 in 1982 to less than half that number today.⁶ But upon what premise was this Supreme Court decision made in the first place? Why would they overturn the pro-life practice of our nation's first three hundred and fifty years?

Herb Titus, legal scholar and constitutional expert, summarized the findings in *Roe v. Wade* by citing the decision; *"A child in the womb of a mother was not human life, only 'potential human life.'*" With the stroke of a pen, a court decision held that a child in the womb was no longer a human being with the right to life.

Interestingly, in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) the Court concluded that slaves were *"beings of an inferior order... so far inferior that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect."*⁷ In essence, the mind of man without the light of God or His Word has regressed to relegating the child in the womb to a slave, the property of the mother!

Though modern culture talks of equality, inclusion and diversity, its hypocrisy is visible for all to see. Today there is no equality with those in the womb, nor inclusivity, and certainly no respect for diversity since many abortions are recommended due to projected handicaps in the unborn child. It is selective worth as predetermined by society.

One of Abraham Lincoln's reasons for his rebuttal of *Dred Scott*, beyond the fact that it was demeaning to the rights of Dred Scott, was that the Supreme Court has limited jurisdiction to

⁴ Supreme Court case 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

⁵ See <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/abortions-since-roe-v-wade>

⁶ See the recent Pew Research Study at <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/06/24/what-the-data-says-about-abortion-in-the-u-s-2/>

⁷ *Ibid., Id.*, 60 U.S. at 407.

individual cases.⁸ He lamented that Scott was a commodity to be returned to his owner, but rejoiced that the decision only applied to that one case, and could not be binding on other States. After all, the Supreme Court's role is clearly defined in Article III, Section 2 where it reads "*The judicial power shall extend to all cases.*" It extends only to the case before it as the text of the Constitution declares.

As Titus has written, "*A case is a dispute between two parties... None of the other 50 states nor any of their residents were parties. Under Article III... no court has the power to issue a general rule binding on people not before the Court.*"⁹ In other words, the Court cannot write law (or expect all the States to follow any decision it makes) as it tried to do in both *Dred Scott* and *Roe*.

Dissenting Justice White in *Roe* stated; "*The Court simply fashions and announces a new constitutional right for pregnant mothers, with scarcely any reason or authority for its action.*" In *Roe* the Court determined that the mother's liberty of choice was a greater right than the child's life.¹⁰

The ancient nations of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Persia, to name a few, practiced the killing of infants in the womb or newly born if the child was not a benefit to society as determined by the State or Empire. But the early Church at the dawn of Christianity disagreed because Christ brought value to each individual, including children in the womb. Christian literature (1st Century) of the Didache stated; "*thou shalt not murder a child by abortion..*" Why? The clause just prior to this states; "*Thou Shalt love thy neighbor more than thy own life.*"¹¹ In other words, the child in the womb is your neighbor, it is not a part of the woman's body.

The early church acted on this, picking up babies set on doorsteps intended to be abandoned by Romans who were taught that their life was only as valuable as the Empire that ruled the society had determined. Tertullian, a 3rd century theologian, wrote; "*...we are not permitted, since murder has been prohibited to us once and for all, even to destroy the foetus in the womb... It makes no difference whether one destroys a life that has already been born or one that is in the process of birth.*"¹²

This right to life became the standard definition eventually codified in Common Law after Christianity permeated the British Isles by the 9th century in King Alfred's England. The Bible and the Common Law had a prominent role in the formation of our nation, and the right to life of the fetus as a human being was recognized as a part of the Law.

The United States was once a Pro-Life Nation

Jurist William Blackstone, whose books on the law were fundamental to those we call founders, wrote that "*Life is the immediate gift of God – a right inherent by nature in every individual;*

⁸ See <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/speech-on-the-dred-scott-decision/>

⁹ Titus, page 6.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pages 4-5.

¹¹ See <http://ww1.antiochian.org/node/16956>.

¹² Tertullian, *Apology* 9.8.

and it begins in contemplation of law as soon as an infant is able to stir in the mother's womb. For if a woman is quick with child, and by a potion or otherwise kills it in her womb; or if any one beat her whereby the child dies in her body and she is delivered of a dead child, this... was by the ancient law homicide or manslaughter."¹³

Now it is true, that today, this concept is hotly debated and contested. In fact, several scholars write that since the "quickening" of the child was the point at which a baby's life was protected by law (due to the science of the time), the baby was not protected prior to this and thus not considered a human being.¹⁴ Modern reasoning imposes upon believers in earlier centuries that they thought the baby in the womb prior to "quickening" (4th month) was not a child. But this is nonsense since no individual said such a thing and history must be interpreted in the context of the time in which occurred.

Jameson Taylor, in his essay on "The Founding Fathers and the Right to Life" gives us further insight about how the framers understood the right to life:

*James Wilson's "Lectures on Law," given at what eventually was to become the University of Pennsylvania, clearly affirm that the right to life encompasses the unborn. Wilson was one of only six men to sign both the Declaration and the Constitution and was a Supreme Court justice from 1789 to 1798. Recognized as "the most learned and profound legal scholar of his generation," Wilson's lectures were attended by President George Washington, Vice President John Adams, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson and a "galaxy of other republican worthies." For this reason, as constitutional scholar Walter Berns states, "Wilson, when speaking on the law, might be said to be speaking for the Founders generally." So what do the Founders say about the right to life?*¹⁵

*Wilson clearly answers this question: "With consistency, beautiful and undeviating, human life from its commencement to its close, is protected by the common law. In the contemplation of law, life begins when the infant is first able to stir in the womb. By the law, life is protected not only from immediate destruction, but from every degree of actual violence, and in some cases, from every degree of danger."*¹⁶ (emphasis added)

John Quincy Adams' speech in 1831 commemorating the Declaration articulated the following; "Ask the Declaration of Independence and that will tell you that its authors held for self-evident truth that the right to life is the first of the unalienable rights of man (and) to secure and not destroy (that right) governments are instituted among men."¹⁷

The recent *Dobbs* decision in June of 2021 returned the practice of abortions back to the State legislatures where it constitutionally belongs. Justice Samuel Alito in his majority opinion wrote; "For the first 185 years after the adoption of the Constitution, each State was permitted

¹³ Blackstone, Sir William, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1771), Vol. 1, pages 129-130.

¹⁴ See <https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft967nb5z5&chunk.id=d0e195&toc.id=&brand=ucpress>

¹⁵ See https://www.lifeissues.net/writers/tay/tay_03foundingfather.html

¹⁶ "Lectures on Law," Ch. 12, p. 597 in *The Works of James Wilson*. ed. Robert G. McCloskey (1967)

¹⁷ Boston, David, Psalm 139 - The Bible, the Founding Fathers, and Abortion, wallbuilders.com; 2012.



to address this issue in accordance with the views of its citizens. Then, in 1973, this Court decided *Roe v. Wade*... Even though the Constitution makes no mention of abortion, the Court held that it confers a broad right to obtain one. It did not claim that American law or the common law had ever recognized such a right... the opinion concluded with a numbered set of rules much like those that might be found in a statute enacted by a legislature.¹⁸

And this is the point, the Court attempted to *enact a law*. The reversal of Dobbs did not outlaw abortion but returned it to individual state legislatures, where decisions could be made closer to the people. This is a step closer to the Constitution, for Amendment 10 states; “*the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.*”

Dobbs will not stop federal funding of abortions. It has, however, exposed how divided we are - twenty states now restrict abortions, at least 19 do not; and the others may fall somewhere in between. Six states (AK, VT, OR, NJ, NM, CO) and Washington DC have no limits on abortion at all!¹⁹ Some contemplate approving of infanticide up to 28 days after birth!

But consider the Bill of Rights as it might be applied to the right to life. Amendment V declares that no person can be “*deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.*” Since the child in the womb is a person, they should not be deprived of their lives since they have not been accused of a capital crime.

The ultimate solution, however, is not in law, but in a revival among the people, for as John Adams wrote, “*Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.*”²⁰

Where do we Go from Here?

When God judges a nation, He judges His people first (1st Peter 4:17). Why does He do so? The first reason is that *as the church goes, so goes the nation*. The other reason is that *His people are to demonstrate both truth and grace*.²¹ Believers ought to know that none of us are innocent of the shedding of innocent blood it was our sin – all of us – past, present and future, that required the only solution from God’s Law- putting Christ on the cross.

Among any gathering of people, a percentage are directly wounded by this issue. As the Valley of Hinnom outside the ancient city of Jerusalem attests, no one is unaffected by the pain of past decisions – by commission or omission.

Abortion is not just a woman’s issue. Irresponsible men can put women into the dilemma of choosing whether or not to abort. We call out the men of this generation to choose life, which

¹⁸ See https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/21pdf/19-1392_6j37.pdf - pages 9-10 (Alito, pgs. 1-2)

¹⁹ See <https://www.axios.com/2022/05/14/abortion-state-laws-bans-roe-supreme-court>

²⁰ “From John Adams to Massachusetts Militia, 11 October 1798,” *Founders Online*, National Archives, accessed Feb. 28, 2020, <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/99-02-02-3102>.

²¹ See Ephesians 4:15 exhorting us, as a matter of spiritual maturity, to *speak the truth in love*.

means to govern yourself in purity, and take responsibility for the children you father! Stop using women as an object and instead respect them as your equal before God!

The shedding of innocent blood cries out from the ground to a holy God, but let's remember that the shedding of the innocent blood of the Son of God (in proxy by all of our sins) has been done by the substitutionary death of Christ. We can repent for our inaction as well as any sin we have committed. *There is forgiveness through the blood of Jesus!*

Abortion is not primarily a political issue, it is moral one. I challenge each of us to allow the Holy Spirit to search our consciences – what might God call you to do as a result of healing you from past decisions? Maybe He might call you to volunteer to help others who are struggling!

Churches must speak the truth, but in love and compassion, supporting ministries that help save babies as well as helping mothers and fathers caught in the web of today's culture wars. *Whatever we do, do all for the glory of God.* (1st Corinthians 10:31)

May God's judgment bring the correction necessary that we might repent for the shedding of innocent blood so that our land can be cleansed. May God also soften our hearts that we might show compassion and love toward those that have had abortions or been affected by them, as well as the political leaders of our day who for whatever reason do not agree with God's view.

May we agree with Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 30:19; *I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life.*