

A Belief That Prevents Abortion

by John Piper

This sermon addresses the sensitive topic of abortion, exploring its causes and the biblical response to each source. It emphasizes the importance of doing the right thing, even in the face of tremendous cost, and highlights the belief that following God's will by relying on His grace never ruins one's life. The speaker aims to bring hope, joy, and stability to those who have made sacrifices for righteousness, while also shedding light on the ripple effects of abortion on families and society.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 6:17, Psalms 139:13, Romans 14:23, John 15:20, 2 Timothy 3:12

Topics: "Abortion", "God's Grace and Righteousness"

Description

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Transcript

Suppose that you are 52 years old, 16 years ago, you adopted a daughter, she was nine, and both of her parents had died, and you had no idea, you couldn't know all the circumstances surrounding her birth and life up until nine years old, and you believed with all your heart, you were doing the right thing. God's glorious, father-like grace was going to shine through your father-like adoptive love. At age 25 now, she's single, has a child, and has aborted four children.

She's pregnant again, and suppose that in her despair and in her sin, she commits one last abortion by committing suicide. And there you are, grandparents in the rubble of your dreams, now facing another adoption, your grandchild. And again, you believe, you believe with all your heart down into your bones, this is the right thing.

And you embrace this child with all the unknown effects of the trauma, and your life is changed forever. That's a true situation in every detail. And a handful of you in this room know who it is, and I ask their permission.

One of the reasons I start with that story is because the ripple effect of abortion is not just a woman, or a boyfriend, or a husband, or a grandparent. It cuts right through every part of life to extended families. It's

not just a moment, it's a lifetime.

Another reason I start with that story is because I want to make plain that what I'm about to say is designed not simply to prevent hundreds of abortions in this church and beyond, but also I want to bring hope and stability and a kind of serious, tear-stained joy in the life of those of you who have chosen to do the right thing at tremendous cost in every area of your life, not just that area. So here's where we're going. I'm going to pose the question, where does abortion come from? And I'm going to give three answers.

They're not exhaustive, there are more answers, but three very important answers. Where does abortion come from? Causes, sources. And then I'm going to give a biblical response to each of those sources, and I want to laser in on number three and show how believing it, embracing the reality of number three would cause abortion to cease.

Cease. Let's pray. Father, across these three campuses now, my heart is full.

I love this church. And my desire is that we would all embrace the wonderful, powerful reality from your word that will prevent abortions among us, among our children, among our grandchildren, among the circle of our influence. And I pray that what you have given me to say would bring serious joy and hope and stability into the lives of those who have done the right thing at great cost in every area of their lives.

I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. So before I pose the question, where does it come from? Where does abortion come from? Let me wave a banner, a flag over this message.

This flag is a sentence, and I took the sentence from the last sermon I preached on Sanctity of Life Sunday at Bethlehem, which was January 2012. And it's a sentence that I know if Stephen Lee or Jason Meyer or David Zuliger were standing in the pulpit, they would be waving it, as they ought. Here's the sentence.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only message, the only message that gives pardon to the agents of death and power to the agents of life. Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, reigning for sinners like us, that gospel, that Christ is the only power that gives pardon for those who are agents of death, have been, will be, are now, and power to the agents of life. Do you want power to be an agent of life? Get it from the gospel.

Do you want power and pardon for being complicit in the power of death? Get it from the gospel. That's the flag waving over this message, the gospel flag. There is one message, one Christ, who gives pardon for those involved in death and power to those who are agents of life.

Now, where does abortion come from? I've got three answers. Here's number one. About 83% of abortions come from fornication.

85% of women who receive abortions are unmarried. Under 2% of those are owing to rape and incest. Hence, 83% of all abortions are owing to fornication.

Now, that's an old word. We don't use it anymore. It's not even in the English Standard Version.

It used to be in the King James. Fornication. And the reason it's not one of the reasons, it's not in your vocabulary, is because the reality it names no longer is called fornication.

It's called recreation. Recreational sex is virtually a given in contemporary entertainment and life. Already 30 years ago, when I was writing occasional editorials for the Star Tribune, like editorials against distributing condoms in high school, the blowback from 20-somethings was like this.

You are crazy! Are you saying we shouldn't experience the fullness of our humanity? What kind of kooky pastor are you? Do you think we should give up this essential part of our being just because we're not married? What planet are you from? That's 30 years ago. You do realize, don't you, Bethlehem, that to be a faithful, biblical, obedient, true Christian today is to be crazy? You're crazy, Bethlehem. God bless you.

May you live and die crazy because fornication is now called recreation, and you're crazy not to participate. Now Paul, the apostle, the inspired, I love him, friend of mine, said a few things about fornication. I'll just read you a few.

Because of fornication, it's translated sexual immorality in the ESV, because of fornication, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. What's the meaning of that? The meaning of that is that God made sex for marriage. He made this amazing thing, this powerful reality, to be surrounded with the protections of a covenant commitment called marriage.

That's what he's saying. A few verses earlier he said, he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee fornication, or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You're not your own.

You were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6.17 Oh, oh, how thankful I am for Ruth Piper, my mother, who drilled into me, Johnny, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, son.

Your 14-year-old body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Johnny. Your 16-year-old body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Your 18-year-old body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Oh, what misery! My mother spared me. Moms, are you listening? It really does sink home. You say it, believe it, pray it, get it in.

83% of all abortions, that's 51 million since 1973, are owing to fornication. Number two, abortions come from self-deification. That's another word nobody uses, right? Deification.

What in the world is that? To deify something is to treat it as God. Self-deification is to act as though you're God. So, I can hear someone say, oh, here it comes, some over-the-top, overstated, fevered, rhetorical, sermonistic flourish about our becoming gods.

If we're pro-choice, you listen and judge. If it's fevered. In 1992, in the case of Planned Parenthood versus Casey, the Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy spoke a sentence, one of the most important sentences uttered in the last 50 years for echoing and shaping our culture.

He said, at the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life. That's breathtaking. Here's one of the outworkings of that self-deifying worldview.

Minnesota, along with 37 other states, have fetal homicide laws. You know what that is? Laws about how you can treat a baby in the womb. You can read these just like I did.

Go to Google and type in Minnesota Statutes 609-2661 following. These statutes distinguish first, first degree murder, second degree murder, third degree murder, manslaughter, and assault, all of them relating to the unborn. For example, Statute 609.2661 says, Whoever does any of the following is guilty of murder of an unborn child in the first degree and must be sentenced to imprisonment for life.

One, causes the death of an unborn child with premeditation and with intent to affect the death of the unborn child or of another. To which you all respond, wait, that's the definition of abortion. Right? Causes the death of an unborn child with premeditation and with the intent to affect the death of the unborn child.

So why doesn't that rule out abortion? They are in the law. Simple. 609.2661 gives some definitions.

A, unborn child means the unborn offspring of a human being conceived but not yet born. Amen. That's good.

B, whoever, how are you going to define whoever? Whoever does not include the pregnant woman. So in the sentence, whoever causes the death of an unborn child with premeditation doesn't include the mom. And then it goes right to the chase in 609.269. All these sections protecting the unborn child do not apply, quote, to any act described in section 145.412, which is all about abortion.

Oh, okay. So abortion is just an exception. Now you ought to think about that.

I'm sure you have. I just saw an article yesterday where somebody was thinking about this. Here's the implication.

It is illegal, Minnesota and lots of states, to take the life of an unborn child if the mother wants the baby. And it's legal to take the life of an unborn child if she doesn't. In the first case, the law treats the fetus as a human with rights.

In the second case, the law treats the fetus as a non-human with no rights. Humanness, the existence of a human being is decreed by the will of the mother. The baby is young and weak.

It can't cry out, I'm a human. Therefore, the will of the older, the stronger, holds sway. And by her will, she may confer upon the human, you're a human, or not.

If she does confer humanness on this thing, no one may kill this baby. And if she does not confer humanness on this baby, it may be legally, with impunity, killed. That is legally enshrined self-deification.

The strong decide which of the weak are persons. We reject that in the case of Nazi anti-Semitism. We reject that in the case of Confederate race-based slavery.

We reject that in the case of Soviet gulag. But in the case of the unborn, millions of people, millions in the church, which is what I care about most, embrace the self-deifying principle, the human will of the strong confers personhood. If she wants the baby, it's a baby.

If she doesn't, it's not. She's God. Now, according to God's word, the baby inside and outside the womb gets its personhood from God.

Stephen just read this backstage to get us ready. I'll read it again. This is Psalm 139.

You formed my inward parts. You, God, You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for You are fearfully and wonderfully made.

My frame was not hidden from You when I was being made in the secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance. In Your book were written every one of them, the days that were formed for me when as yet there was none of them.

God's divine person-forming work in the womb is not to be preempted by any self-deifying human being. So I say again, number two, abortion is caused significantly by human self-deification. Number three.

And this is the one that I want to linger on, laser in on, because it has such remarkable implications, not just for those most immediately involved in abortion, but for all of us, anytime you attempt to do the right thing at some cost. Okay? So here's number three. Abortions come from the failure to believe that doing the right thing never ruins your life.

Abortion comes from the failure to believe that doing the right thing never, never ruins your life. Throughout history and millions of times in recent decades, unintended pregnancies have been met with the devastated cry, if I keep this baby, I'm 14. I'm a freshman in college.

If I keep this baby, my life will be ruined. Or a worse sentence, if you keep that baby, our lives will be ruined. Abortion happens because pregnant women, men, boyfriends, husbands, parents, grandparents, look at the implications for years and years, and say, your life will be ruined.

The loss of so many dreams, the change of so many plans, forever, forever. Over against that despair that so many feel at that moment, I'm going to show you from God's word that doing the right thing never ruins your life. Never.

You can see right away that the implications of that sentence, that truth, that reality, relates to all of you. Right? All of you. Perhaps it's this week.

Perhaps it's 10 years from now. But you're going to make a choice. You're going to stand at a fork in the road.

And this is going to be the right way with tremendous cost. And this could be the wrong way to try to minimize the cost. And this sermon, I pray, will have power at that moment because it's true.

What I'm about to say is true. It's what God says, not what the world says. So this relates to all of you.

So hang on for a few more minutes. Doing the right thing never ruins your life. Let me explain it and then support it from the Bible.

Here's what I mean by it. Doing the right thing means doing the will of God, the revealed will of God. I love precise people.

There are a lot of you in this room. Doing the right thing means doing the revealed will of God in reliance on the blood-bought grace of God. It's never enough.

Parents, listen up now, and all of you. It's never, never, never enough to say, Just do it. Just do it.

It's the right thing. That's not Christian ethics. I don't like those T-shirts.

Romans 14, 23 says, What does not proceed from faith is sin. Just do it. It's not Christian.

If acts don't proceed from faith, they're sin. God's grace is not glorified where it is not relied upon in doing the right thing. Therefore, what I mean when I say doing the right thing never ruins your life is doing the revealed will of God in reliance upon the grace of God never ruins your life.

That's what I mean. You got that? That's my interpretation of my sentence. What do I mean by ruin? I mean make your life worthless.

Make your life not worth living. Make your life meaningless. Make your life useless.

Make your life unlivable. Make your life more than you can bear. Make your life joyless.

Make your life so bad that at the end you will regret having lived it. That's what I mean by ruin. That never, never, never happens to those who do the right thing.

I mean being a Christian is a wonderful thing. Believing what the Bible says is a glorious thing. Now, let there be no misunderstanding.

Doing the right thing in reliance upon Jesus and for the glory of Jesus will bring much suffering into your life. I mean his words are crystal clear over and over. John 15, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they will persecute you. Acts 9, I will show you how much you must suffer for Christ, Jesus says to Paul. Luke 6, people will hate you and exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil on account of the Son of Man.

Matthew 10, do you think that I have come to bring peace on the earth? I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. A man's enemies will be those of his own household. Luke 21, you will be delivered up by parents and brothers and relatives and friends and some of you they will put to death.

That's Jesus telling us what the unruined life looks like. Here's Paul, my friend. 2 Timothy 3, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Romans 8, it may be through tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword. Or it may be from his own experience, great labors, imprisonments, beatings, shipwreck, danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers. You want to escape danger? Don't be a Christian for goodness sakes.

What an idiotic choice. Which of course has been turned right on its head by the prosperity gospel and I fear it's infecting evangelicalism because we're just so comfortable in America. We can't imagine putting our lives at risk to do the right thing.

Danger from robbers, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers, toil and hardship through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, in cold and exposure. Some of you resonate. Welcome to the life of doing the right thing.

The unruined life. Afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, not ruined. Is that what he's saying? Let me read it that way.

Afflicted in every way but not ruined, perplexed but not ruined, persecuted but not ruined, struck down but not ruined, not meaningless, not useless, not more than you can bear, not joyless. Doing the right thing. A beautiful life, a beautiful life.

Broken hearted life, full of joy. Broken hearted love, unwavering faithfulness, built out of the jagged fragments of shattered dreams and infinitely worth living. You know, I've been a part of this church for 40 years, and I've watched this happen.

I've loved you so much because to take the child you didn't expect, fold them in, and your life has changed forever because of the disability. And countless other choices that people have made here because they believe the Bible. They believe the grace of God.

They believe a life is worth living unless you're shot through with difficulty. That's the kind of people I want to be around. So the last question is, I close with this.

So why is that life worth living? I mean, that was bleak. If that's what you mean by unruined, not sure I want to sign up, which is why, of course, people left Jesus. Don't sign up.

He told them not to sign up if they don't count the cost. Don't build a tower if you can't build a tower. Just take off.

I'm giving you the best life imaginable, full of pain. Why? I mean, how can that be? How can you talk like that, Jesus, Paul, Piper? Because the Christian gravestone that's over every buried dream reads, Satan meant it for evil, God meant it for good. That's the gravestone over every lost, buried dream.

Because the Lord is a sun and shield. The Lord gives grace and glory. No good thing, against all human calculation, no good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.

Take a breath and believe. Because no matter what you lose in this life, you have a better possession and an abiding one. Great, great is your reward in heaven.

Rejoice when men persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice, great is your reward in heaven. How many of you live that way? How many of us, embedded in this pleasure-soaked world of ours, take heart and live in light of the superior satisfaction in the reward of God's presence? Because life is a vapor, James 4, a prelude, and the symphony lasts forever.

How many of you stand before and say, my life is going to be ruined? I said, what? What's a vapor of ruin anyway? But do we live that way? Do we have the sense that the life between now and the day you die is a vapor? And then the symphony is forever. There's a great article by Marshall Shelley, used to be the editor of Christianity Today, that he wrote about his childhood, who lived for two minutes. How relevant today, right? Childhood for two minutes.

And he said, no, he didn't. No, he didn't. He's alive.

Whether it's two minutes or what, 75 years, what's the difference? In light of eternity. Vapor, two minutes. Vapor, 75 years.

But if your mindset is, this is what we have to deal with. This is our life. You kill your baby.

And make a lot of other horrible decisions. That's not who we are. Because this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory.

Because for this, Jesus died. He died for this. He died for your right choice.

He bore our sins in his body on the tree that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. That's why he died. So that we would expect undeserved, blood-bought grace to give us meaningful, deep joy in the living of this unplanned for life.

Bethlehem, may I speak of you this way, even though I'm not a pastor anymore. I love you so much. Pray for you every day.

This is who we are. We are Christian hedonists. I wouldn't be bold to say that if I didn't know Stephen and Jason and David and the elders.

This is who we are. We are Christian hedonists. Meaning, we believe God gets great glory through our contentment in him through suffering.

That's my definition. A Christian hedonist believes in his bones. God gets great glory through the contentment of his people in God through suffering.

That's who we are in this church. We believe God is shown to be an all-satisfying treasure when our joy, our serious, tear-stained, sorrowful joy never dies through the pain of doing what's right. Doing the right thing never ruins your life.

Never. Never. Doing the will of God by the grace of God never ruins your life.

Where that is believed and lived, abortion ceases. And the glory of the grace of God is exalted. Let's pray.

Father, grant now, I pray, just turn the message into a prayer. Grant that your people would be so sexually pure that they would not have to be prodded to preserve that gift of sex for the marriage bed. Grant that your people would never play God but gladly exalt that you are God and you decree personhood.

And grant that we would believe against all human calculation that doing the right thing, doing your will by your grace, never, never, never ruins our lives. I ask this in the mighty name of Jesus. Amen.

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