

Fighting the Good Fight: Abortion

James 1:19–27 | 01.21.2018 | Public Spiritual Disciplines

What does it take to make a tree grow strong?

I suppose . . . it takes a good seed . . . good soil . . . good sunlight . . . and good rain.

Anything else? How about wind? Even strong wind?

Does wind . . . play a part in the strength of a tree?

It does . . . [researchers in California](#) report that wind is a necessary component in strengthening trees. Studies have proven **TREES** without wind grow tall but without much trunk strength.

The same principle applies to the human body.

Good health is not the result of diet alone . . . the body needs physical exercise.

In particular . . . the body needs strength training to be healthy.

When I studied exercise science in college . . . we learned how muscle strength increases resistance training . . . AND THIS because of microscopic tearing of the muscles.

In fact, some studies even show that a terrible diet with strenuous exercise was healthier than a good diet with no exercise.

Well . . . if resistance is needed for trees and human bodies to flourish . . . it is equally true for souls.

Isaiah 61:3 . . . calls . . . the redeemed oaks of righteousness . . . not saplings, not shrubs, but massive trees that reflect God's righteousness.

And James 1 . . . says . . . trials are given to us . . . so that they might test us, mature us, and make us complete in Christ. Listen to verses 2–4.

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

This month . . . we have considered the Word of God and prayer.

In so many ways, these personal disciplines are like spiritual food. Without them we have no strength and no sap . . . to produce fruit to God's glory.

ATST, **PERSONAL** spiritual disciplines by themselves aren't enough. And so this morning . . . we'll see how we must be more than hearers of the word, we must do what it says

Spiritual growth requires a good diet . . . BUT IT ALSO . . . requires enduring great resistance.

I say all this . . . because . . . **There is a need for spiritual disciplines that are outward-looking.**

If we all our focus is on personal Bible reading, private prayer, and other self-disciplines, we'll miss a key component to spiritual health and growth.

Like the ultra-nutritionist who won't exercise, we might get full on spiritual food but without pushing against the world . . . we will remain weak and immature.

Worse . . . our hearts might grow cold and calloused . . . even as we stuff our minds with truth.

So . . . with that in mind . . . we take this week and next to consider two of the most rampant forms of injustice in our world – abortion and racism – and seek to see what the Bible says to us about them.

Indeed, our goal here is not advance a political agenda.

Rather. . . because the Bible proclaims the gospel of Christ's **KINGDOM** . . . it has a message of grace and power that speaks to all areas of life . . .

Moreover, because the gospel proclaims a message of **justification by faith alone** . . . it frees us from working FOR God . . . and empowers us to work for the good of others!

As Martin Luther once put it: **“God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does.”**

And so . . . we approach these subjects as ways to LOVE our neighbor as ourselves . . .

And we let James, the half-brother of Jesus, the bondservant of Christ . . . be our guide.

So that . . . we can walk in God's ways . . . as we

. . . oppose abortion.

. . . seek racial justice.

So let's get started!

This morning . . . is Sanctity of Life Sunday . . .

A Sunday that remembers . . . The 59 million children who have been killed in the womb since 1973 – the year Roe v Wade made abortion legal in all fifty states.

It is a Sunday that calls our attention to pray and work against abortion and for women and their children through compassionate outreach to abortion-minded mothers.

ATST, we can't understand the evil of abortion, without seeing its connection to racism.

That is to say . . . from its earliest promotion, abortion has been a mechanism aimed at minorities, especially blacks in our country.

The American Birth Control League, later retitled Planned Parenthood, purposefully put birth control clinics in predominately minority areas.

Margaret Sanger was passionate about population control and purifying the human race. And so when she began to set up clinics, she did so with Eugenic purposes in mind.

Eugenics – the same ideology that led Hitler to exterminate 6M Jews – drove the Sanger to target New York City immigrants and later Southern Blacks.

And what is the result?

[79% of Planned Parenthood clinics are located in low income areas.](#) (2012)

In 2014, [56% of black babies were aborted in New York City.](#) Do the math – that's more beautiful, black babies aborted than brought to life.

Does this mean blacks and Hispanics are more prone to abortion? NO!! NOT AT ALL!!

It means Margaret Sanger and the leaders of Planned Parenthood have preyed upon the impoverished women of our country for decades.

And as we will see next week, this poverty is related to the racial injustices that fill our country's history and still make vulnerable women today.

Here's the point . . . if we are going to stand against abortion, we need to see how evil it is . . . how it preys on the weak . . . how it only empowers those in power . . . and how it lies in order to destroy life.

As John Piper put it in a sermon entitled, "[When is Abortion Racism?](#)" . . . concluded:

The . . . net effect of putting abortion clinics in the urban centers is that the abortion of Hispanic and Black babies is more than double their percentage of the [rest of the] population... Call this what you will— when the slaughter has an ethnic face and the percentages are double that of the white community and the killers are almost all white, something is going on here that ought to make the lovers of racial equality and racial harmony wake up.

Wake up indeed!

If you care about the end of abortion in our country . . . then you must care about racial justice and the economic injustice that makes minority women in urban areas more vulnerable.

And if you care about racial justice . . . THEN you must care about the end of abortion . . . in our country.

We might throw in one more area of justice . . . if you care about women and the mental, physical, emotional, and financial well-being of women . . . then you need to see how this kind of targeting of impoverished, minority women does not advance women's rights . . . it crushes them

Here's the Truth. . . **Abortion endangers women's health** . . . b/c it all kinds of short-term and long-term risks

Abortion endangers women's souls . . . as elective abortion – I'm not talking about medically-required abortion, where a woman's life is in danger – but elective abortion . . . takes the life of a human life . . . it is violation of the commandment – thou shall not kill.

And worse . . .

Abortion tempts women in their hour of crisis to trust in themselves and to find salvation through infanticide – the killing of a child.

By contrast . . . the gospel . . . and the church . . . and the thousands of pregnancy care centers offer a message of hope . . . forgiveness . . . and life.

Indeed, we talk about abortion this morning . . . because we do need to wake up and see why opposing abortion is a good fight . . . when it is pursued with faith, love, and hope.

So, with long introduction in place . . . I want to give three answers to the question"

Why do we oppose abortion?

Why do we stand for the lives of the unborn and the mothers who carry them?

1. Because it **pleases** God.
2. Because it **protects** the image of God.
3. Because it **produces** Christ-likeness in us AND it offers Christ to others.

1. Standing for Life and Opposing Abortion PLEASES God

Look at James 1:26–27 . . . **READ**

In these two verses we get a clear picture of true religion, or what a devout life looks like.

In **v. 26**, we get the negative side of the coin—religion devoid of life-giving speech is worthless.

In other words, when the tongue is used in vile ways to tear down, deceive, malign, or hurt. . . it reveals a heart that is filled with venom.

In James' letter . . . he talks a lot about the tongue. And he teaches us that those who have been born by the word of God (1:18) will speak in a certain way . . . and this speech is used to love others and pursue justice.

But he says . . . that when such life-giving speech is absent . . . such a person's religious observance is worthless.

Now importantly, James doesn't make the modern error . . . which is to say ALL RELIGION is worthless

He's not anti-religious . . . and he's not making the common but unhelpful statement that Christianity is all relationship and no religion.

No, actually God has instituted church, ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper), church offices (elder and deacon), and number of other religious things for the health of the church.

Yet, as James and the Old Testament Prophets know all too well . . . religious observance that lacks life-giving words . . . is not true religion.

And this feeds into the second verse, v. 27, which is the positive side of the coin.

Religion that is pure and undefiled by the world pleases God because:
. . . **it visits orphans and widows in their affliction.**

In other words, a religion that pleases God the Father . . . is one that cares for the vulnerable, the weak, and those who are fatherless – **this would certainly include the unborn!**

In OT, the orphan, the widow, and the foreigner were highlighted as people whom the people of God were to have special care.

Deuteronomy 10:18 says, “[Yahweh] executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”

Likewise **Deut 24:17** passes this command to Israel: You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge,¹⁸ but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

Do you hear the motivation?

Because you have received mercy, you shall be merciful.

Because God defended you in your weakness, you shall defend the weak.

Because God's grace saved you, you shall be gracious.

And if this is true with Israel, who only received a physical salvation in the Old Testament, how much more for those who received grace and eternal life??

Right? If anyone should be gracious and compassionate to orphans and widows, it should be those who know what it means to be orphans adopted into God's family.

And thus, James points out . . . **This is the kind of religion that pleases God.**

God is not pleased with our attempts to repay him for the grace he has given to us.

Nor is he pleased when we use our gifts to climb the ladder of life and society.

He is pleased when we use our lives to benefit those people who cannot repay us—the orphan, the widow, the foreigner, the homeless, the hopeless.

Indeed, care for the unborn and the mothers who are abortion-minded certainly falls into this category.

Again, if we see that most abortion clinics are located in impoverished areas . . . we must go to those areas with a message of hope AND physical assistance.

This is exactly what James means when he says in James 2:14–17 . . . **READ**

He is not saying that works is what justifies us before God. Rather, you SEE in the good works done for others . . . the believer's saving faith.

In this . . . it is not enough for us to use our words to wish people well. Rather, our lives must be meet the needs of others who are threatened by death.

As **Proverbs 24:11–12** says, Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?

Is there any verse that applies to the pro-life movement more than this?

This verse tells us God will judge us if we knowingly turn a blind eye to the needs around us.

It completes the thought in James 1 . . . that God is pleased when we rescue the unborn.

Why? Because it reveals God's character to the world . . . AND . . . it protects the image of God from being destroyed by the lies of the devil.

That's the second reason . . . **we oppose abortion . . . to protect the image of God.**

James 3 tells us we ought to watch our tongues, B/C every person is made in God's image + likeness

This is a reference back to Genesis 1 and the universal reality . . . that all people have inherent value because God made them for his glory – this is true in all stages of life, including the womb.

CHURCH . . . It's this image of God that PP and other agencies of abortion seek to destroy.

Now . . . in their rhetoric and in their marches, they always present abortion as a good + necessary piece of healthcare . . . they'll say this choice to abort . . . empowers women.

But don't be deceived . . . the empowerment is found in empowering women to destroy life.

Only God has the right to give life and take it away . . . and anytime humans take that power into our hands . . . it goes badly . . . VERY BADLY

Too often . . . such self-empowerment has often led to death . . . even infanticide—**killing of the innocents**

In Scripture, we find this . . . where pagan nations offering up their children . . . **and for what reason?**

To improve their lives . . . to make conditions better for their families . . . **SAME LIES AS TODAY!!**

Consider these words in **Jeremiah 19** . . . If you have a copy of the Bible, go ahead and turn there . . .

In Jeremiah 19:4–9, the weeping prophet recounts how God's covenant people have been seduced by their neighbors . . . and have offered their children to false gods.

Because the people have forsaken me and have profaned this place by making offerings in it to other gods whom neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah have known; and because they have filled this place with the **blood of innocents**,⁵ and have built the high places of Baal to **burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to Baal**, which I did not command or decree, nor did it come into my mind

This is a horrible passage . . . and it's horrible because of how deceived Israel had become.

God had been saved Israel from idolatry and the life-destroying practices of infant sacrifice that filled the ancient world . . . but here we see how they fell back into those practices.

And how? Because . . . they listened to the lies of their pagan neighbors.

To be sure . . . America is not Israel. We do not have a covenant relationship with God, as a nation. But in our history, Christianity has shaped our country in every facet of life.

So we must ask: how did abortion become so prevalent in our culture?

Surely . . . it has a cause, a root. And we need to know what it is.

Like Israel . . . our country has been deceived by pagan sexuality . . . and in particular by people like Margaret Sanger who have brought a pagan view of sexuality that destroys God's image.

To understand our situation . . . we need to see what sort of lies have been told:

As I mentioned, Margaret Sanger was a champion for eugenic control of the human race . . . but more than that . . . she was an advocate for all sorts of marital infidelity and sex w/o risk of children.

Long before the sexual revolution of the 60s . . . she was intoxicating others with a lust for lust.

In NYC . . . she led discussions about birth control and all kinds of deviant sexual behavior. She became an evangelist for sex education . . . and the empowerment of women.

Not surprisingly, Margaret left her husband . . . and then began to write a paper . . . *T. W. R.*

Because these papers contained sexually explicit material, she was indicted for breaking the Comstock Laws . . . instead of going to trial, she fled the country.

In England, she came under the influence of a 19th C writer, Thomas Malthus. His views on population control and eugenics added to her passion for sexual liberty. **She drank from the same streams that would lead to the Holocaust in Germany!**

She also pursued numerous sexual relations in England, where a many of her partners encouraged her to return to America with a mission to make abortion available for all women.

To do that, tho, she had to remove the radical edge of her message. She did this and set up her first birth control clinic in 1916 . . . This is what PP marks as their inception, even tho PP . . . 1942.

In the 1920s Sanger began The Birth Control League and *The Birth Control Review*, a newsletter that publicly endorsed eugenics and the purification of the human race.

In 1939, she began something called the **Negro Project** that aimed to reduce the number of black babies in the South. To do this, she recruited black ministers and ran a carefully-worded campaign to promote birth control and abortion in minority communities.

Then after World War II . . . with the atrocities of the Holocaust turning public opinion against eugenics, the Birth Control League changed their name to **Planned Parenthood**.

The rest, as they say, is history. Through a massive campaign to acquire other birth control clinics, she grew Planned Parenthood into an international force.

In time, Sanger's support of the birth control fueled the sexual revolution and changed the way Americans look at sex.

Likewise, her political efforts pressured the courts in *Griswold vs CT*, whose ruling gave the unquestionable right to privacy which led to the ruling in *Roe v Wade* and *Obergefell v Hodges*.

Church . . . this is our country's history . . . and in it . . . we find a satanic assault on the image of God.

Through Sanger and her lies . . . 59 million children made in the image of God have been killed.

And how many other lives of women have been ripped apart by the ministry of death offered through abortion.

Again, why do we fight the good fight against abortion?

Because God loves his image-bearers . . . and abortion is a direct attack on his image.

In this way . . . abortion is not first . . . a political issue, a policy issue—it is a glory of God issue.

And those whom God has saved by his grace, are called to defend his glory.

And importantly . . . we don't oppose abortion for life through violence, threats, or worldly power.

No. This is spiritual warfare, where prayer and the Word of God are our weapons.

And we don't seek to accuse or berate women . . . we seek to bring the good news that will free them and all sinners from the lies of the enemy.

And thus . . . we seek not to be mere hearers of the Word . . . but we seek to do what it says.

Which brings us to the instructions of James 1:19–25.

The THIRD REASON we oppose abortion . . . is because such resistance **produces** Christlikeness.

That is to say . . . because we oppose abortion **with the good news of Christ** . . . standing for life makes us more like Christ . . . even as it offers others the chance to know Christ.

Indeed . . . this is what the gospel offers that nothing else can . . . and thankfully it is the gospel that impels so many pregnancy care centers to bring hope to those who are abortion-minded..

Our church supports and participates with CareNet for this reason . . .

We want to see the deadly lies of Planned Parenthood exposed . . .

We want every child to have a chance at life . . .

We want every mother who is tempted to abort their child . . . to choose life

AND We want those who have already made the decision to abort their child to know that Christ offers forgiveness, healing, and a new life.

That's our prayer . . . but to see such Christ-centered ministry . . .

We must put into practice the words of James 1 . . . and we do that in 2 ways.

First, we must listen, love, and lean in to those who are abortion minded.

READ James 1:19–20 . . . let be said, anger is not the way to approach this [fight](#).

Rather, we need gentle, humble, caring Christians . . . willing to listen and to speak with grace.

We need counselors—trained and untrained—who are willing to be a shoulder to cry on, a friend to lean on, a source of strength and hope, and a personal connection to the church.

How does Christ show himself to the world? It should be through his church.

Sadly, the church is too often confused with hateful groups like **Westboro Baptist Church**—which is neither a church, nor Baptist, and probably not a reflection of Westboro, Kansas either.

But that's so often what the world sees . . . and that's what gives PP credibility.

In response, we need to show the world – **our neighbors** – the greater love of Christ,

Through our praying, caring, comforting hands . . . we display the grace of God . . . and we rewrite their understanding of Christ and his people.

And when we do that . . . when our words become actions . . . we become like Christ.

And we take Christ to others.

That's the first way James 1 teaches us to be Christ to others.

The second way comes in **verses 21–26**, where the word of God is emphasized.

Notice how many ways the word of God is mentioned here . . . **READ vv. 21–26**

In the Christian's life, the word of God saves us . . . as **James 1:18 tells us**

It also produces growth in us, as James 1:21 indicates – the word implanted in us grows as we walk in that word.

In fact, to NOT DO the word . . . is an evidence that perhaps we don't have the Word.

But when the word of God is truly sown in our hearts . . . it will produce love, life, and change.

That's the point here . . . God's Word impels to action.

Christians are not people who look at themselves in a mirror and go away unchanged; Rather, we are people who look into the Word of God and ARE changed.

And because we are changed by the Word . . . we can bring the promises of Christ to others.

Friends, this is the second way we become like Christ and offer Christ.

We don't enter this spiritual warfare with food and clothing only.

Rather, we bring the good news of Christ . . .

That's the point of **v 26** . . . if you think you are religious and yet your mouth is absent of God's word . . . and your heart is not thrilled with the gospel . . . beware, your religion might be a sham.

But for those who know God in his Word and have been changed by it . . . we can bring a word of hope to those whose who think their lives have come to an end.

This is true in general . . . but because of the lies that make abortion the saving solution . . . this is especially true with regards to an unplanned pregnancy and abortion minded woman.

Brothers and sisters,

We must not let Satan have the only mouthpiece. We who know the Word . . . must take the gospel to those who are abortion minded.

And we must not just take words . . . we must also sacrifice our lives, time, and resources to care for the women who are considering abortion.

And . . . that goes for anyone here today . . . whether you have had an abortion, paid for abortion, or are considering an abortion . . . the Lord has given you another way . . . **and his name is Jesus . . . look to him, call out to him, take shelter in him . . .**

That's why we gather to worship him . . . he binds up the broken hearted; he heals the sick; he pardons the guilty; he empowers the weak . . . **if you are in need . . . look to him and let us help.**