

Text: Proverbs 24:10-12 (Pew Bible pg.649)

Title: “Our Rescue Mission”

Before I get started today I want to say just a word to those of you who are married or who are about to get married. During the month of February we’re focusing on strengthening marriages. And to prepare for that we’re asking our married and engaged couples to participate in something online. It’s called Couples Checkup. You can read about it in the worship folder and then go online for details to take the Couples Checkup. We need you to do that by the end of the month. Make that investment in your marriage.

ILLUSTRATION – Tomorrow is Martin Luther King Day in our country. That day commemorates the tremendous strides that have been made in our nation in the area of civil rights. The Declaration of Independence says that “all men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights,” namely the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. And certainly in the last 50 years our nation has made great strides in this realm. And as believers we must rejoice in this because social justice comes from the heart of God.

But there is one group of human beings in our land today whose rights are not being protected. They do not have the freedoms that other human beings enjoy in our land. I’m talking about approximately 1 million of these human beings who were robbed of their right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I’m talking about the unborn.

Open your Bibles to Proverbs 24:10 (pg.649). Today is a day that you may not go home feeling exhilarated. I’m praying that you’ll let God lay on your heart a burden that you will not be able to shake or shirk until you do something about it. Of course the book of Proverbs is filled with the wisdom of God as it is written by Spirit-inspired men such as Solomon. Read text.

This is wisdom. And I want to challenge us today to apply this wisdom in a very particular way.

1. AN OBSERVATION (v.10)

Proverbs 24:10 - If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength!

We are in “times of trouble,” specifically as it relates to what I believe may be the most pressing moral issue in our land today ... the issue of abortion. Now I have asked our friend Shelley Lee, the Director of the Fort Worth Pregnancy Center, to help us focus on the issue of the sanctity of human life.

INTERVIEW WITH SHELLEY

- This really is a time of trouble in our nation regarding the sanctity of human life and the issue of abortion. Paint the picture for us.
- I'm so thankful that the FWPC and other strong centers are facing the battle head on. Tell us how FWPC is attempting to rescue the unborn and to help their parents.

- I'm going to come back to this at the end of my message, but tell us how we can be involved. Our church already supports the FWPC through our missions budget. How can individuals be involved?
- The statistics show that many women who attend church have had abortions. This is a vital concern for the pregnancy center. What would you say to them today?

We're going to have prayer for Shelley and others at the end of the service, but express your gratitude for her and the work of the FWPC.

Actually there has been some good news. Legislators here in Texas cut Planned Parenthood from the state's budget this year. They also passed a law that abortion providers must show the mother ultrasound images of the baby inside her body before performing the procedure. There's also news that the number of abortions in the US has been dropping in recent years, but I think you would agree with me that killing a million babies a year is nothing to celebrate. This is, indeed, a day of trouble.

So there is an observation, but also there is...

2. AN EXHORTATION (v.11)

Proverbs 24:11 - Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter.

The first word in v.11 ("rescue") is an imperative verb. Wisdom demands that we act.

The presumption is that those being led away to death and slaughter are innocent. Again, it is a matter of social justice. Something should be done to rescue them and to hold them back from destruction. The exhortation is that we are to use whatever powers are at our disposal to do this.

What is at stake here is a human life. And we must have a biblical worldview on this matter. If your response to the abortion issue is rooted in anything other than the character and activity of God as revealed in Scripture, you will likely end up on the wrong side of this debate.

- Look at what the Bible says about what goes on inside a woman's body during pregnancy. Turn with me to Job 31.

Job 31:13 - "If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me,

Job 31:14 - what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account?

Job 31:15 - Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?

So what do we know? Look at Job 31:15. We know that God makes people “in the womb.” God forms us “within our mothers.” What these verses tell us is that how we respond to other people in matters like this is directly related to what we know about the activity of God and the character of God as revealed in Scripture.

And v.14 says we will give an account to God if we treat people in any way that ignores the fact that what is happening in the body of a mother is the activity of God in creating and forming a human being ... from conception to birth.

Psalm 139:13 - For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.

Psalm 139:15 - My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

Psalm 139:16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

- Consider what the Bible says about a person’s life after they are born. If we believe that the beginning of a person’s life happens at conception inside the body of the mother, then to snuff out that life anytime during that nine-month period while they’re in the body of their mother is to snuff out their purpose for living after they are born. God has a purpose for every human being who is born.

(King David) Psalm 139:16 - your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

(To the prophet Jeremiah) Jeremiah 1:5 - “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

(Apostle Paul) Galatians 1:15 – God ... set me apart from birth and called me by his grace...

ILLUSTRATION – You may have heard the story of a woman named Pam. More than 24 years ago, she and her husband Bob were serving as missionaries to the Philippines and praying for a fifth child. Pam contracted amoebic dysentery and went into a coma. She was treated with strong antibiotics before they discovered she was pregnant. Doctors urged her to abort the baby for her own safety and told her that the medicines had caused irreversible damage to her baby. She refused the abortion. While pregnant, Pam nearly lost their baby four times but refused to consider abortion. Pam eventually gave birth to a healthy baby boy. Her youngest son is now a preacher. He preaches in prisons, makes hospital visits, and serves with his father’s ministry in the Philippines. He also plays football. Pam’s son is Tim Tebow.

I know there’s a big argument about when the embryo actually becomes a person. That really becomes a non-issue when we understand from Scripture that what happens inside the body of a mother from conception is the person-forming activity of God.

Someone may argue, “I know that’s what the Bible says, but science or medicine says this, and sociology says this, and politicians say this.” So what? Our worldview is to be shaped first and foremost by God’s revelation of Himself and His ways revealed in Scripture. Innocent persons are being killed, and we are bound by Scripture to do what we can to rescue them.

So there’s an observation, an exhortation, and there is...

3. A MOTIVATION (v.12)

Proverbs 24:12 - If you say, “But we knew nothing about this,” does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?

In other words, the writer is saying, “You know better than to try to plead ignorance. You can say that you knew nothing about it, but God knows otherwise. He weighs the heart and perceives our intentions. God knows it. And we will all have to give an account for what we have done ... to help the cause of life or to hurt it.

Ignorance is no excuse. We must act, because we are accountable to God in this matter. Innocent persons are being led off to death and slaughter. God demands justice, and justice demands that when we know that innocent persons are being harmed, we must act. How?

BE INFORMED. Be informed of what the Bible says about the issue of abortion and our response to it. Also be informed about what’s happening.

ILLUSTRATION – Unless something happens, one million babies will be killed through abortion in 2012 ... 6000 right here in Fort Worth. Planned Parenthood is the largest single abortion provider in the United States. I know you may think that they are just an organization that helps underprivileged women. What you should know about PP is that they are responsible, by their own account, for a full one-third of the abortions that happen in America. For every three pregnancy tests given at a PP facility, one child was aborted. There’s an agenda at work here.

Additionally we have learned that Planned Parenthood in Fort Worth is planning to build a mega-center in SW Fort Worth, somewhere near Harris Hospital SW, and near one of the finest adoption agencies in the US, the Edna Gladney Center. They have been very secretive about their plans, not even divulging the location of the center; but it appears that the center will be four times the size of its current center. And the indications are that this mega-center will feature state of the art facilities for abortions.

BE INVOLVED. It’s not enough to know. We must put our knowledge to work for us. Here are a few ways you can be involved (they all start with V):

- View women and babies with compassion.
- Value prolife organizations ... pregnancy centers, the adoption option. Support them financially.
- Volunteer in a pregnancy center.

- Vote for pro-life candidates. Prolife presidents appoint prolife Supreme Court judges. Prolife legislators enact prolife laws.
- Voice prayer to the Father to deliver us from this scourge upon our land.

ILLUSTRATION – Martin Niemöller was a German pastor during the days of Hitler’s rise to power in Nazi Germany. The German church was notoriously silent as Hitler began to purge chosen targets of people, group by group. Niemöller’s conscience began to plague him to the point where he could no longer be silent against Hitler’s atrocities. When he spoke up, he was thrown in a concentration camp where he stayed until the end of the war. Niemöller is famous for a statement he made that summarizes the issue that we’re talking about today ... abortion. Niemöller said:

“In Germany they first came for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then 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.”