

## **The Truth About Abortion**

### **By David Feddes**

Politicians who favor abortion rights sometimes talk as though Christian teaching is unclear about abortion. They talk as though the Christian church throughout the centuries has held a variety of opinions about abortion. This is false. Christian teaching is crystal clear in opposing abortion. The Christian church since the first century has condemned abortion as murder.

Unborn babies can't vote. They can't speak for themselves. But God's Word and God's church speak in their defense. The vast majority of people in North America claim to be Christians, but many ignore what Christianity says about abortion. Politicians ought to defend the weak, but some support abortion and even suggest that there is no clear Christian position against it. Let me say again: this is false.

### **Clear Christian Teaching**

The Bible speaks of the marvelous way God forms us in our mother's womb. Psalm 139 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb... your eyes saw my unformed body" (v. 13, 16). When the Bible speaks of people like Jeremiah and John the Baptist, and of Jesus himself, it speaks of them even before birth, not just after. The Bible clearly treats unborn children as sacred human lives being shaped by God. And God protects all human life in the command, "You shall not murder." The Christian church, living in the light of God's Word, has always understood that abortion is a horrible offense against humanity and against God.

Two of the earliest Christian documents, dating to less than a century after Jesus' resurrection, were the *Didache* and the *Epistle of Barnabas*. The *Didache*, a Greek title, which means "The Teaching," said explicitly, "You shall not murder a child by abortion." The *Epistle of Barnabas* said the exact same thing: "You shall not murder a child by abortion."

The Church Fathers in the next few centuries declared the same message. Clement of Alexandria wrote, "Those who conceal their immorality by taking drugs to bring on an abortion completely lose their own humanity along with the fetus." Athenagoras wrote, "Women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to give account of it to God." Tertullian said, "To hinder a birth is merely a speedier man-killing; nor does it matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth." The Apostolic Constitutions declared, "You shall not kill your child by causing abortion... For everything that is shaped and has received a soul from God, if it be killed, shall be avenged."

When the Christian leaders of those early centuries talked about abortion, they made it clear that men were just as much at fault as women. John Chrysostom thundered against men who sexually exploited women and then pressured them into abortion. Chrysostom denounced what he called "murder before birth" and said,

Adultery leads to murder, or rather to something even worse than murder. For I have no name to give it, since it does not get rid of the thing born, but prevents its being born. Why then do you abuse the gift of God, and fight with his laws... and make the chamber of life [the womb] a chamber for murder, and arm the

woman who was meant for childbearing unto slaughter? ... For even if the daring deed be hers, yet you are the cause.

Chrysostom knew all too well that for every woman who aborts a baby, there's a man who is at least as much to blame.

Even when Roman Catholics and Protestants parted ways on some things, they continued to agree that abortion is wrong. For example, Protestant Reformer John Calvin wrote,

The fetus, though enclosed in the womb of its mother, is already a human being, and it is almost a monstrous crime to rob it of the life which it has not yet begun to enjoy. If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his place of most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a fetus in the womb before it has come to light.

All through the centuries, the Christian church and its leaders have applied the teaching of the Bible to the matter of abortion and have denounced it in the strongest possible terms. Michael Gorman researched the early church's attitude toward abortion, and found three main themes that came up over and over: "the fetus is the creation of God; abortion is murder; and the judgment of God falls on those guilty of abortion." That's *the* Christian position on abortion. Anyone who says otherwise, for personal or political reasons, is wrong.

Up until the last few decades, this was understood by all nations with a significant Christian influence. Even Planned Parenthood used to oppose abortion. A Planned Parenthood pamphlet from 1963 said, "An abortion kills the life of a baby after it has begun. It is dangerous to your life and health." So, then, what changed? Planned Parenthood changed. Public policy changed. But the truth hasn't changed. God hasn't changed. Christianity hasn't changed. The Bible's revelation that human life is to be protected from womb to grave hasn't changed. Science confirms what Christianity has been saying all along: a unique human individual comes into being at the moment of conception. That may be an inconvenient truth, but truth it is, and we must not ignore it or look for ways to get around it. Human life begins at conception and ought to receive protection.

We've seen that the Bible speaks of human life in the womb as precious to God, and we've seen that the Christian church from the first century until now has defended unborn life and condemned abortion. If that is Christianity's unchanging truth about abortion, then what has changed? How could individuals and politicians and courts abandon their obligation to protect the right to life of unborn humans?

## **Gods of Sex and Death**

What changed is this: people fell back into the most ancient and horrible of all religious errors. Many ancient religions, not acknowledging the one true God, made gods of sex and death their ultimate realities. They put orgies and human sacrifice, sex and death, right at the center of their religious practices. Today the ancient error is back. People see sexual indulgence as the greatest good. But even with all our contraceptives and sex education, sex still does what God designed it to do: it still makes babies. Indeed, the sexual revolution has produced millions of babies that the parents didn't want. The only way to worship sex is to give death its due as well. If you want sex to

come before all else, the price is that you have to be willing to kill a baby once in a while—or fifty million, if necessary.

In ancient times, when people killed a baby to improve their own status, it was called child sacrifice. Today we call it "choice." In ancient times, when people ingested the flesh of a dead child, it was called cannibalism. Today, it's called fetal tissue research. Just as the ancients would sacrifice children with the approval and help of men in priestly robes, so today, we sacrifice children with the approval and help of judges in black robes and doctors in white robes. The Bible says: "bloodshed follows bloodshed... my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:2,6). When God says that, he's not just talking to people in ancient times. He's talking to us. Lack of knowledge, ignoring reality, lying to cover murder—that's why bloodshed follows bloodshed in abortion clinics across this continent and around the world.

We've turned away from God; we've idolized the glory of sex and the power of death, and we're right back with those ancient people, wallowing in the same immorality and bloodshed. God is talking about *our* culture; he's talking about *us*, when he says in the Bible, ""They shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters" (Psalm 106:38). "They have committed adultery and blood is on their hands... they even sacrificed my children" (Ezekiel 23:37). I know, I know. It's not polite to talk this way. We're not supposed to use harsh words, and we're not supposed to drag religious convictions into the abortion debate. But God isn't so polite. He sees the idolatry, the adultery, the child sacrifice, and the cannibalism for what it is, and he declares his wrath against the whole bloody mess.

### **Norma's Story**

But that's not the whole story. The Lord also offers an opportunity to change, and he promises forgiveness to those who repent and trust him.

Norma McCorvey is the woman who was once identified as "Jane Roe" in the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark abortion decision *Roe v. Wade*. Norma's legal action was the occasion for making abortion a nationwide right, destroying millions of babies. She was very proud of this and once told a reporter, "I live, eat, breathe, think everything about abortion."

But one day, Norma McCorvey accepted a child's invitation to go to church. There she broke down crying and kept saying, "I just want to undo all the evil I've done in this world. I'm so sorry, God. I'm so sorry." Finally she stopped crying and started smiling. "I no longer felt the pressure of my sin pushing down on my shoulders," she said. "The release was so quick that I felt like I could almost float outside."

Norma came to understand what abortion really does. "It's as if the blinders just fell off my eyes and I suddenly understood the truth—'that's a baby.' Abortion ... was about children being killed in their mother's wombs. All those years I was wrong." But even though she was so wrong, she could still be forgiven through faith in Jesus' blood poured out for sinners when he died on the cross. Norma McCorvey declared, "I'm one hundred percent sold out to Jesus and one hundred percent pro-life. No exceptions. No compromise." In 2005, she petitioned the Supreme Court to overturn its decision approving abortion. Her petition was denied, but the fact remains that Norma McCorvey, the Jane Roe of *Roe v. Wade*, now thinks the court was dead wrong, and she now defends the unborn. In the summer of 2008, she declared, "I am dedicated to spreading

the truth about preserving the dignity of all human life from natural conception to natural death.”

Norma McCorvey is living proof that God’s grace is greater than any sin. If you've sinned by committing abortion or by supporting policies that permit and promote abortion, you can be forgiven. Jesus gave his blood to save people with blood on their hands. But Jesus forgives only those who admit their guilt and ask for his forgiveness and seek to be different. In the Bible the Lord says,

“Your hands are full of blood; wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! ... Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool” (Isaiah 1:15-18).

The truth about abortion is that it destroys a precious human individual. The truth about abortion is that it can be forgiven through repentance and faith in Jesus. The truth about abortion is that it must be opposed by Christians, and that the right to life should be upheld in public life.