

The Father to the Fatherless

James 1:22-27

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Introduction

Over the course of any year, many stories grab the headlines. Looking back on 2015, one of those stories was the undercover planned parenthood videos. As those videos emerged to the forefront of the cultural conversations, the horrors of the abortion industry were dragged out of the darkness and into the light. Evil loves the cloak of darkness and the veil of secrecy. Much of the abortion industry would prefer a “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. Just let us do our murderous work, and don’t ask any questions.

Yet, when videos came out showing Planned Parenthood executives speaking so cavalier about abortion and the strategic techniques used to harvest the child’s organs, our consciousness were appalled. Many Americans have no idea what happens in an abortion procedure, and sadly so many women who have them do not know either. The barbaric act involves the dismemberment of a human child filled with cutting, ripping, and sucking. As this dark procedure came into the light, many were disturbed, outraged, and horrified. Yet, others continue to defend Planned Parenthood.

Though many decades have passed since the supreme court’s infamous decision of Roe Vs Wade in 1973, the issue of abortion remains unsettled. Our country remains polarized on matters of abortion and the sanctity of human life.

So here we are again, on this Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, and I want to draw your attention to this crucial biblical concept and call us to action. With James 1:22-27, particularly verse 27 as our focal text. My prayer is that we would discover that God cares for the marginalized, and that God’s care for us would compel us to take action.

1. God Cares for the Marginalized

All of Scriptures tells of God's care for the poor, the fatherless, the widow, and the oppressed. God loves the least of these; he cares for the marginalized. When you begin to work through both the Old and New Testament, the scriptural data is overwhelming. Let me share with you a few verses as a sample.

- *"You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child."* (Exodus 22:22, ESV)
- *"He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing."* (Deuteronomy 10:18, ESV)
- *"For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever."* (Psalm 9:18, ESV)
- *"As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought for me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!"* (Psalm 40:17, ESV)
- *"Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation."* (Psalm 68:5, ESV)
- *"He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap,"* (Psalm 113:7, ESV)
- *"Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him."* (Proverbs 14:31, ESV)

The Scripture declares that God opposes the wealthy and the powerful; God combats those who oppress the weak and the frail. God speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves. He contests any social order that exalts the mighty and takes advantage of the weak.

As we look at the Biblical passages, who better qualifies for poor, fatherless, weak, and frail than unborn children? Every human being is created in the image of God and has the divine right to life. There is no deformity, no disease, no circumstances, and no human law that can take away that right.

Thomas Jefferson penned that great declaration of independence which says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Our founding father's recognized that every human being is endowed or given certain rights by our creator. The right to life is not an American construction, but a right given to each and every one of his image bearers, whom he created. How tragically ironic that the nation that first penned this declaration would deny the right to life, take away liberty, and forbid the pursuit of happiness to the unborn in the womb.

The laws of our country must not infringe upon the rights of human beings, including unborn human beings. And woe to the nation who does infringe on the right to life! Let's take a look at Jeremiah 22:1-5,

"Thus says the Lord: "Go down to the house of the king of Judah and speak there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the Lord, O king of Judah, who sits on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their servants and their people. But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the Lord, that this house shall become a desolation.'" (Jeremiah 22:1-5, ESV)

Now the circumstances are different. America is not Israel. Nor is America the people of God; the people of God is the church. Yet, in Jeremiah's word to the king of Judah speaks of a universal principle. Woe to the nation ignores justice and righteousness. Woe to the nation who does wrong and enacts violence to "resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow." To update it to our own context we could say this: woe to the nation who does wrong and enacts violence to the illegal immigrant, the unborn child, and the homeless. A righteous nation cares about the least of these, because God cares about them. This word of instruction to Judah comes with consequences. To obey God's call to social justices means blessing and prosperity. To disobey God's command to social justice means destruction and desolation. Whether God blesses or judges America, that is His decision to make.

Yet, the point remains that God cares for the marginalized, and judges any nation that does not does share in his compassion for the least of these. Though our nation neglects the call to care for the fatherless, the church should lead the way in Gospel-centered, social justice, because the gospel of Jesus compels us to action.

2. The Gospel Compels Us to Take Action

So I want to help us see how the gospel compels us to action. The gospel is the good news of Jesus. The gospel speaks of the kingdom of God, the rule of Christ over the cosmos, and the restoration of this broken world. The gospel

ushers in a new resurrection-reality that brings redemption, forgiveness, and love to sinners. It is the gospel that fuels our motivation to care for the fatherless, particularly the unborn.

We must understand that we are orphans. The Scriptures speak of God's love as a loving father who adopts us and brings us into his family. Spiritually, everyone of us is orphans, abandoned to our sins, exposed in eternal suffering, and hungry for love and family. Lamentations 5:3 says, "We have become orphans, fatherless."

Yet, as we have already mentioned, God cares for the marginalized. He sees us in our lowly estate; he sees our suffering; he sees our hunger, and he chooses to adopt us as his children. He sent Jesus his own son, to purchase us and bring us into his family. Our salvation tells one beautiful story of adoption. The story of the Bible describes a loving Father who sacrificed everything to love his children. He spared no expense, even if it meant the sacrifice of his only-begotten son.

Yet, even though Jesus has been raised from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father, God did not abandon us like orphans. Rather, now we have the Holy Spirit. Jesus says, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18, ESV). He gives us a helper, the Holy Spirit until Christ returns for us.

These glorious Gospel truths amazes us. If you are a Christian, you've received the adopting love of God. You've experienced the love of God yourself. How amazing it is that God's love would descend to choose broken, unwanted children like us. Though you may feel unwanted, good for nothing, and worthless, God the Father declares: "I love you. I want you. Become my child, and let me become your father. Come enjoy the warmth of my embrace and enjoy your inheritance as my son or daughter." You want that kind of love. I want that kind of love. If you want to become a son or daughter of God, he invites you into his family today. He calls you to turn from your sin and trust in his son Jesus Christ for your salvation. Come to the Father through the son, and enjoy the privileges of being a child of God.

So when we become a child of God, we are called to action. We spread the kingdom of God and share in our Father's care for the orphan. As Paul would write in Ephesians, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, ESV). As our focal passage in James tells us "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22, ESV). James tells us that one of the ways we prove to be a part of the family of

God, is that we obey God. Disobedience to the command of God indicates spiritual deception. Our obedience proves our son-ship.

But, what motivates us to action? How does the Gospel compel us to take action for the least of these?

We are compelled by gratitude. As we think about all that God has done for us, we cannot help but be grateful, and that gratefulness leads us to obedience.

We are compelled by love. We want to imitate God, be like him in his care for the least of these. As God has loved us, we love others. Children are like their fathers, and the church should be like God. We share in the care of God for the least of these. Indeed, we are an extension of the love of God.

We are compelled by God's Kingdom. The kingdom of God speaks to our individual salvation on a micro level, but on a macro level it speaks to the restoration of the cosmos. God will renew all things and restore all things from sins corroding influence on the world. As citizens of God's kingdom and members of his family, we are compelled to see his kingdom advance.

We are compelled by the Great Commission. We do justice and serve the least of these as a part of our Great Commission work to make disciples. Social justice goes awry, when we forget that people need Jesus. Out of love and compassion, let us care for the marginalized, but let us also take the Gospel message with us, inviting all people to trust Christ as the savior and king.

We are compelled by God's glory. At the end of the day, this is the ultimate motivation for all we do. We want to make God's name famous through all the earth. We want his rule to spread, his kingdom to come. We want the nations to be glad and sing for joy, as all of the cosmos sings in climatic praise to God!

So now that we have outlined how the Gospel compels us to action, particularly social action, I want to help us apply this to the care of the fatherless—the unborn and the orphan. As you hear my call to action, I pray you will be a doer of the word and just a hearer. May the Gospel engulf your heart that you are compelled to do something, no matter how small.

3. How You Can Care for the Orphan

So what are some ways you can care for the Orphan? Let me give you five ways.

First, pray for the cause of life. Perhaps the best way for you to take action today is to pray. Indeed, this is an action we should all take up. We should pray for the cause of the unborn, and ask the Lord to advance the cause of life in our country and around the world. May we labor on our knees praying for the cause of life, interceding for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Second, give to pro-life organizations. We hope to put this one into practice today. On your way out the door today, some of our GAs will pass out baby bottles for you to fill with money for the Wilson Pregnancy Center. The Wilson Pregnancy Center works on the front lines of the cause of life in our city. It is a ministry that needs our support, particularly our financial support. Recently the Wilson Pregnancy Center launched as a medical facility. Now they are able to give free ultra-sounds to woman who may be considering abortion. All of their services are free to the public, supported by donations from churches and individuals in our community. So take the bottle or a few out the door and fill them with coins, cash, or checks. We will collect those bottles during our morning worship service on Sunday February 7th. May you give generously to the Wilson Pregnancy Center, and if God has so blessed you financially to give above and beyond your church offerings, may some of you consider becoming a monthly supporter of the ministry.

Third, support pro-life legislation. A part of the fight for the sanctity of human life means political activism. As Christians we should not avoid the political sphere, but engage our world with the Gospel, even Washington. The United States is a republic, and we have the privilege and responsibility to guide the course our governing bodies take. Let us exercise our rights to vote and support candidates and legislation that advances the cause of life.

Fourth, take in foster children. We must put our money where our mouth is. If we are going to lobby that every human life deserves life, the church must step up their efforts to care for the orphans around us. There are many children without parents or who have been taken away from their biological parents. As the people of God, compelled by the Gospel we must practice true religion. We must care for the orphans. By no means is every family called in to foster children, but I have a feeling more families are called to this ministry than obey. There are orphans that need a home and that need love.

What better home for an orphan than a Christian family compelled by the Gospel.

Fifth, adopt the orphan. Foster care provides a wonderful ministry opportunity to be “doers of the word,” but some may be called by God to adopt orphans. If we encourage women to continue with their pregnancy rather than abort, there should be legions of Christian parents ready to adopt those little babies.

Some of you might be thinking, “Well I’m too old to adopt!” Well maybe so, but if you’re in your 40s or 50s, adoption could very well still be something God calls you to do. Sure you may have an empty nest, but why not die to yourself and fill the nest up again with adopted children who need a home.

Some of you might be thinking, “Well I have too many kids already! I have my two kids, and I don’t want anymore!” Well, when did God’s call to obey Scripture depend on your preferences? Maybe you think you have the perfect number of kids, but God’s number may be different. I pray that many families in our church would consider bringing on another child or two through adoption, compelled by the Gospel to be a father to the fatherless.

Adoption is not only for those who can not have children naturally. Adoption is a second-tier way to have kids, that we do only if we can’t have “real children.” That’s foolishness. What compels us to adoption isn’t biology but theology. May our family planning be driven by the Gospel not the American dream. So I pray that many of our families, particularly our younger families would make plans to adopt children while the nest is still empty. I pray that many young couples go home today and talk with one another and say, “How many kids will we have biologically and how many through adoption?” Kaitlyn and I have had that conversation. We hope to one day adopt, not because we can’t have children, but because there is a little girl in Africa who is starving, and she needs a daddy; because there is a little boy in India who wonders if anyone loves him and anyone wants him. And if God gives me the opportunity one day, I want to be an extension of his love to that little child.

Final Thoughts

Church, on this sanctity of human life Sunday, may we not be hearers of the words only, but doers of the word. May we be compelled by the Gospel to fight for the cause of life and may we open up our homes to the orphans around us. “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” Yes, you won’t be able to save every life or adopt every

orphan. But what you wish you could do for all, do for one. May we rise to the occasion today and obey God's call on our lives to care for the fatherless, no matter the cost and no matter the sacrifice, compelled to do so because God so loved us.