

# Why Preaching the Gospel Is Sometimes Not Enough

I've been asked the questions many times. *Why do you draw attention to abortion? Why not just stick to your messages on intercession and revival?*

It is often framed to me as an analogy of the human body and how disease attacks it. People ask, "Why treat the symptoms, like abortion, and not address the root issue—which is an unsaved heart that needs Christ preached to it? People need to be changed by the cure, an encounter with God through the gospel."

Not only have I wrestled with this over 20 years of ministry; many others have before us. Charles Finney, powerful revivalist during the 1850s, took a strong stand against slavery. Yet when many of his disciples, like Theodore Weld, began to emphasize abolitionism as much as revival, Finney had the same concern many feel today.

## Healing Hearts vs. Changing Society?

Finney believed that revival alone could change the heart and the laws supporting slavery. He felt the immediate ending of slavery without changed hearts could only hurt the cause of ending slavery. He wanted more time for the cure of the gospel to take root.

Abolitionists and revivalists were at odds. But before long, they began to appreciate the roles each played. They began to understand that slavery was the symptom and the gospel was the cure—yet both abolitionist and revivalist were simultaneously necessary to change hearts and society.

Most of America didn't have a problem with the national ill of slavery, and had no idea how this cancer was eroding moral

foundations upon which the original settlers founded this nation. God used revivalists of the heart (gospel evangelists) and revivalists of society (the abolitionists) to help America see its need for a Physician.

It took two revivals, the First and Second Great Awakenings, over the course of almost 150 years, until hearts began to change. Hearts in need of eternal life found it ... yet still, people were blinded to the societal needs of humanity. The divine remedy, revival, unfortunately didn't result in changed laws to end slavery immediately.

The abolitionist movement rose up, with Francis Asbury in the Revolutionary Era a forerunner. They were the leaven of truth in society, advancing the kingdom of God by being countercultural change agents.

It took a Civil War to shift this nation fully into what God wanted: the end of slavery. The divine remedy, revival, became divine preparation for judgment against America—and the Civil War took place.

In his Second Inaugural Address, President Abraham Lincoln voiced his views on the Civil War as divine judgment. He said, "Fondly do we hope, and fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war would speedily pass away."

"Yet, should it be that God desires it to continue, until all the wealth gained by the 250 years of unrequited toil of the bondsman be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn by the lash, shall be repaid with sword—" Lincoln concluded, "Then we must say that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

Today, yes, abortion is a societal symptom of the diseased heart of our nation. And once again, just as in Charles Finney's day, the question is: "Which is more important: addressing societal symptoms, or addressing root heart issues?" The truth is, in the grand scope of advancing the

kingdom of heaven, both are equally important.

We need revivalists, and we need abortion abolitionists—whom God uses together to subpoena the conscience of a nation. Changed hearts work to change laws ... and this comforts God's heart.

### **Broken Intercession**

Is justice really that important to God? Could He really need comfort? Isaiah 59:15-16 gives us the answer:

"Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him that there was no justice. He saw that there was no man and was astonished that there was no intercessor; therefore, His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness sustained Him."

Take note of two very important words in these verses: "displeasing" and "astonished." In Hebrew, these words reveal God's heart over injustice. "Displeasing" is the word *raa*, which means "to spoil something by breaking or shattering it into pieces." The Hebrew word for astonished is *shamem*, which means "to devastate, to amaze, to stun, or to grow numb."

Think of it: When the Creator of the universe sees injustice, His heart is broken. He then seeks someone on earth to share this burden with Him in intercession and bring relief to His heart. When He can't find anyone who is concerned about injustice, He is astonished, stunned and devastated!

The word "justice" in this verse is *mishpat*, which means "a verdict announced judicially," especially a sentence or formal decree.

Whether the lack of justice is legalized racist decrees, such as the *Dred Scott* decision during slavery, or other court injustices like *Roe v. Wade*, it is God's desire to have

intercessors be moved by His heart and, through prayer and involvement, release His kingdom justice on earth.

### **“How Long, Oh Lord!”**

As the cries of black slaves longing to be set free once echoed before the throne of Heaven, today the cries of post-abortive women and lost little lives are heard.

More than 600,000 people died in the years-long conflict of the Civil War. Without nuclear bombs, jets or advanced weaponry, brother fighting against brother using bayonets, muskets and cannonballs produced more casualties of war than World Wars I and II, the Korean and Vietnam Wars—all combined!

If the Civil War was God’s divine judgment for slavery, as Lincoln thought, and God used it to avenge the innocent blood of slaves, what does judgment look like for 57 million babies being slaughtered in this nation alone since 1973?

Unto that end, beloved, I press. I preach the gospel, yes, but I am a voice for the voiceless babies who are aborted. In the opening analogy, it’s true that a body cannot be cured if the symptoms are only treated. Yet no one can heal, unless they recognize their symptom as something wrong, as a sign of illness.

In other words, as it was with slavery, many Americans don’t see abortion as a problem, as a symptom of something wrong, as something not normal, as killing an innocent life God created ... as *murder*, let alone sin. Revivalists and abolitionists must come to terms with what God is calling them to take a stand for, and against—and ultimately stand with God, and each other.

My prayer is that God sends us another awakening, and it changes hearts so radically that abortion ends. I long for the day where today’s abortion clinics become tomorrow’s museums of what we *used to do* in this nation.

I daydream of hearing a museum guide saying, “This was the unfortunate dark history of how we used to devalue life and the unborn, but now there aren’t any abortion clinics—because in America every baby is welcomed into life and protected by law.”

Maybe that awakening won’t be our divine remedy; unfortunately, it may become our preparation for divine judgment for the shedding of innocent blood through abortion. Either way, we pray and contend for awakening, and we pray for the release of justice—knowing that our Great Physician is also our Great Judge, Who hears the cries of the oppressed.

### **The Personal Cost**

Some have told me I am an eloquent speaker or insightful communicator ... but I “limit my scope” by drawing attention to abortion. Yet as it was with Theodore Weld in his day, I *must* tell the truth about this great injustice.

Preacher and abolitionist Elijah P. Lovejoy said it best when he spoke of his preaching against slavery. He couldn’t stop because “... I would fear that the angel of the Lord with His flaming sword would pursue me wherever I went. I don’t fear man, I fear God.” Lovejoy knew this was his divine assignment from heaven.

I’ve been told I’d sell more books, have more church invitations to speak, get booked on Christian TV shows and make more money—if only I would speak less about abortion.

But if I used whatever bit of eloquence God has given me to speak and write, and not carry out the assignment God has given me, than all I’d be doing is gathering up wood, hay and stubble to be burned before our Master Jesus Christ at my day of reckoning.

The sanctity of life is not the only issue I speak about; I address many different things. But *woe to me* if I don’t tell

the truth about this great atrocity of abortion. Just as sure as I know the Lord, I know the assignments He has given me—being a voice for the voiceless who have been aborted is one of them.

Yes, it has been a lonely road at times. There has been much pain in the offering; I've even lost family members and friends along the way. The warfare has been intense, to say the least. Nevertheless, the momentary afflictions of this life cannot compare with the eternal weight of glory that is yet to appear.

What if abortion could end in my lifetime? Perhaps speaking the truth in love about abortion only makes the wheels of hell grind harder—as part of the resistance against this demonic machine. Nevertheless, if only one life gets spared, then I say “Yes” to His will!

With the psalmist I can say, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers them out of them all.” A classic poem's final stanza also comes to mind: “When the victors, when they come / When the forts of folly fall, find my body near the wall.”

Ultimately, being a voice for the voiceless isn't about the aborted babies alone—nor only about the women who've been harmed by abortion.

Jesus said, “If you've done it unto the least of these, you have done it unto Me.” It's also about being a voice for a voiceless God in heaven, who is looking for an intercessor on earth to be His mouthpiece to a generation.

Maybe you're reading this and thinking, “Why not me?” And to that, I believe God is saying: *Why not you?*

Be a voice. In light of all that's been revealed in the current video investigation of Planned Parenthood abortion centers, how can any of us stay silent?

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