



# TRUTH ON TOUGH TEXTS

EXPOSITIONS OF CHALLENGING SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

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## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE *REALLY* SAY ABOUT ABORTION?

### EXODUS 20:13 AND SELECTED TEXTS

**I**N A RECENT SERIES OF MESSAGES ON THE MORAL LAW I shared with the sheep under my care, we began, of course, with “The Preface to the Ten Commandments” (Ex. 20:1–2; 34:28). We noted there five principles: the giver, gift, grace, goals, and governance of the Moral Law. Of special emphasis were those goals: it is a *mirror* to show us what we are, a *map* to point us to Christ, and a *mandate* on how we are to live. While we recently released the book based on that series, it is to that last emphasis I would like to call your attention in this article. I pray it will encourage and challenge all of us.

#### The Moral Law

Briefly, the Moral Law is, indeed, our mandate. A few years ago, a very well-known pastor was asked by an interviewer, “Are we under the Ten Commandments?” His shocking answer was, “No. The Bible says we are not under the Law.” He then added that we do not serve the Law but serve one another in love. That deeply troubled me. Such a misunderstanding of the Moral Law is very disturbing in a prominent Christian leader. Yes, love is certainly at the *core* of all this, but the Law is the *manifestation*, the outworking of love, the exposition of love. D. James Kennedy put it very well: “It is good in these days of lawlessness to recognize God’s Law still does apply—even to Christians. It applies *especially* to Christians.”<sup>1</sup> Why does he say *especially* for Christians? *Because it helps us as it is the rule for living.* In other words, while the Law *condemns* the sinner, the Law *controls* the saint.

After all, why were the Ten Commandments written on *stone* tablets? Why didn’t God just create a scroll and write them on that? They certainly would have been easier to carry. No, they were etched in stone to represent their *perpetuity*, their eternal nature, their absolutes for all time. In today’s atmosphere of moral *relativism*, there is no better statement of God’s absolutes than His Moral Law. It ever remains in force, regardless of those who just want to wrap up everything in love and think that is good enough.

Now, so there is no misunderstanding, the Law is not the *means of salvation*—salvation is by grace alone through faith alone. The Moral Law, however, is part of the *method of sanctification*. In other words, it is not the *path to righteousness*, but it is the *pattern of righteousness*. To put it another way, the Ten Commandments are not *prison bars*, but rather *pro-*

*tective boundaries*. They are the guardrail on a mountain road. They are the light that illumines our path and reveals the dangers. Still another way to understand this is that God’s Moral Law is there not to *pound* us into *compliance* with it but rather to *protect* us by our *conformity* to it. Puritan Samuel Bolton put this masterfully: “The law sends us to the gospel that we may be justified; and the gospel sends us to the law again to inquire what is our duty as those who are justified. . . The *law* sends us to the *gospel* for our justification; the *gospel* sends us to the *law* to frame our way of life.”<sup>2</sup>

The Moral Law, therefore, stands forever as the very foundation of right behavior, that which we can never keep perfectly, since we are still in the flesh (Rom. 7), but ever strive to emulate. Again, no one is (or ever has been) saved by keeping *any* law, including the Moral Law (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:11; cf. Matt. 19:16–26). But obedience of God’s Word (Jn. 14:15, 23; 1 Jn. 2:1–5), which includes holiness of life (Eph. 4:24; 1 Thess. 4:3, 4, 7), is proof positive of genuine salvation. In our fallen condition, the Law only *showed us* our sin and need for the Savior (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 3:19–25), but it now *serves us* by outlining exactly how we are to live.

#### The Sixth Commandment

With that introduction to the sermon series, we then turned to address each OT *commandment* of the Moral Law, its NT *counterpart* and the combined *confrontation*. It was when we arrived finally at the Sixth Commandment—**Thou shalt not kill** (Ex. 20:13)—that I was particularly struck by its profound meaning and applications. The first thing that hit me was how significant it is that this command appears here. It is the first one that speaks exclusively of our dealings with all other men in general. So, the worst possible sin to commit against another is murder. Why is murder an abomination to God (Prov. 6:17)? One reason is that life, *all life*, is precious and as originally created was miraculous, magnificent, and majestic. No life therefore is to be taken lightly. Another reason, however, is that in the specific case of man, he was made in *God’s image*, making murder a direct attack on Him. So heinous is this crime that God instituted capital punishment some 850 years before this commandment was given (Gen. 9:6; cf. Matt. 26:52; Rom. 13:4; Rev. 13:10).

This command obviously does not refer to all killing.

Scripture is clear in Genesis 9:3 that the killing of *both* animals and plants is permissible, not to mention necessary. Those who argue that it is wrong to kill animals for food minimize the reality that plants are also alive and we kill them to eat.

Further, this verse has been used by our nonresistance and pacifist brethren to teach that *all* killing of human beings is wrong. While we love those dear folks and certainly agree with their high view of the sanctity of life, both the Hebrew and Greek words that are used unambiguously speak of murder, not *all* killing. If all killing is sinful, in fact, it is very hard to explain why Jesus would instruct his disciples to buy a sword (Lk. 22:36) if He did not expect them to use it for personal protection or the defense of others. While some insist that “sword” is just figurative language picturing the need for courage, does it not seem odd that one would need to sell a *literal* garment to buy a *figurative* sword? We might also ask, where can one purchase courage? The Greek behind “sword,” in fact, is *machaira*, the typical short sword of the day, both a personal protection weapon for a civilian and the main weapon of a soldier. The obvious equivalent in our day is a firearm. Our American Founding Fathers, a few of whom were believers, also recognized the real world and therefore wrote the Second Amendment.

The word **kill**, therefore, is the Hebrew *rātsach*, which while at times is used for an accidental killing (Num. 35:11; Josh. 20:3), or even death by means of an animal attack (Prov. 22:13), it is used *primarily* to indicate premeditated murder. Jeremiah, for example, indicted the people: “Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And [then] come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?” (Jer. 7:9). The psalmist asked: “LORD, how long shall the wicked . . . triumph? . . . They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless” (Ps. 94:3–6; see also Deut. 5:17; Judg. 20:4; Hos. 4:1–2; 6:8–9).

If any doubt remains, it is completely erased by the Greek behind “kill” (*phoneuō*) in Matthew 5:21—“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill”—and several others that refer to this commandment (Matt. 19:18; Mk. 10:19; Lk. 18:20). This word, in fact, is *never* used in any other way than murder in the NT. Jesus pronounced a woe upon the Scribes and Pharisees because they were “the children of them which [murdered] the prophets” (Matt. 23:31). It likewise appears in Romans 13:9 (a direct reference to the sixth commandment) to parallel (and thereby clarify) the use of the Hebrew *rātsach* in our text (see also Jas. 2:11; 4:2; 5:6). This word is also used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 4:42; 5:17).<sup>3</sup>

### The Application

When we turn to the practical application of this commandment, it goes much further than just murder committed during a robbery, a jealous rage, or other such situation. It brings up issues such as capital punishment and war, both of which are addressed in the book. The one that many (even Christians) do not wish to face, however, is *abortion*, but it in reality needs more attention than all the others, for it ad-

dresses the unthinkable: the legalized murder of millions of unborn people by those who wear surgical scrubs.

While the “procedure” they perform under the guise of a woman’s so-called “reproductive rights” is called “abortion,” that term is actually a misnomer. Do you know the etymology of that word? It is from the Latin *abortionem*, which means “miscarriage.” The word “abortion” is, therefore, far too mild a term for what is going on in this country. These are not *sad miscarriages*; rather they are *sadistic murders*. There is no greater example of the results of man’s rejection of God’s Moral Law than this perverted, premeditated, and profiteering murder of unborn human beings. There is also no greater scourge upon America and no greater violation of freedom and liberty. There is, in fact, no greater proof of the depravity of man. Open any history book and you will see this practice among pagans.

I was reminded here of God’s annihilation of the Canaanites. Among its many perversions—such as incest, adultery, prostitution, sodomy, and bestiality—there was also child sacrifice in the worship of Moloch:

The image of Moloch was a human figure with a bull’s head and outstretched arms, ready to receive the children destined for sacrifice. The image of metal was heated red hot by a fire kindled within, and the children laid on its arms rolled off into the fiery pit below. In order to drown the cries of the victims, flutes were played, and drums were beaten [cf. 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10].<sup>4</sup>

How could even the most depraved of minds conceive of such an act? But, on the other hand, what is the real difference between that and the version of “Moloch” we have today, as millions of babies are sacrificed to the gods of selfishness, convenience, and greed? What is the difference between the red hot arms of Moloch and the curette (a hook shaped knife) of today’s so-called surgeon as he hacks that baby to pieces or sucks that tiny body out through a tube while he listens to music on his iPod?

It is beyond shocking that since the *Roe v. Wade* decision by our warped Supreme Court on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1973 (as they legislated from the bench), more than 61 million babies (an average of 3,800 per day) have been legally murdered. Numbers can sometimes be just academic and abstract, so to put that into practical perspective, that is the *combined total* population of four states: Florida, New York, Illinois, and North Carolina. It is also the population of the entire country of Italy. While many people are still shocked (and rightly so, of course) by the Jewish Holocaust under Hitler and his henchmen, few see any comparison to the American Holocaust that makes that first one almost pale to insignificance. So, think about this: What is the result of rejecting God’s Moral Law?—*Holocaust!* To put it still another way, World War II was the deadliest military conflict in history in which an estimated total of 70–85 million people perished. Abortion is another war that is approaching that number.

Now, in response to the Supreme Court’s recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, which ended the so-called “constitutional right” to abortion, many think this will change everything, when in reality it will change little. While the issue has now been handed over to the states, many of them have already passed legislation to protect the “right” to have an abortion,

although a few have banned it. In the end, however, woman will just go wherever they need to go to get the procedure. Several corporations actually foot the bill for their employees' travel expense. The majority (62% as of July 2022) of the American population, in fact, disapproves of overturning *Roe v. Wade*, which proves that changing legislation does not change the depravity of the human heart.

To further understand this depravity, one need only observe the place abortion has been given in American society and politics. In her excellent, eye-opening book, *Godless: The Church of Liberalism*, Ann Coulter titles one chapter, "The Holiest Sacrament: Abortion." In it she writes:

No liberal cause is defended with more dishonesty than abortion. No matter what else they pretend to care about from time to time . . . the single most important item on the Democrat's agenda is abortion. . . . The Orwellian dishonesty about abortion begins with the Left's utter refusal to use the word abortion. It would be as if members of the National Rifle Association refused to use the word gun. These "pro-choicers" treat abortion the way Muslims treat Mohammed: It's so sacred, it must not be mentioned. Instead we get a slew of liberal euphemisms for baby-killing: "reproductive freedom," "a woman's right to control her own body," "terminating a pregnancy," "freedom of choice," "a woman's own private medical decision," "a procedure," "access to health care," "family planning," "our bodies," "our selves," [and] "choice."<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, if I may use another term that reflects Liberalism's obsession with death and greed, abortion is its Holy Grail, the holy cup from which all liberals drink as they sit around their "communion table." If I may also wax political for just a moment, for any Christian to vote for a democrat (or libertarian, for that matter, as that is also their platform) is unthinkable. Equally appalling is that in recent years some evangelical leaders have insisted that Christians should not vote based on this single issue but weigh all the issues. What kind of thinking is that? How many other issues does it take to outweigh the slaughter that is going on? If I may lovingly but no less forcefully say to these, "What's the matter with you? How can you advocate murder for any reason whatsoever? Do you think for one instant that Jesus would do so? Shame on you!"

Speaking of greed, what is another driving force of this holocaust? *Money!* As a June 10, 2019 article by CNN Business stated, "Top executives from more than 180 companies have a message for lawmakers: Restricting abortion is 'bad for business.'"<sup>6</sup> Indeed it is. Consider Planned Parenthood alone. As another article documents:

A recent Heritage Foundation report analyzing many years of Planned Parenthood's medical and financial data found that the organization is a billion-dollar abortion business with an increasing market share of total annual abortions in the United States. Meanwhile, other areas, including prenatal services, cancer screenings, and contraception clients, have dramatically declined.<sup>7</sup>

To say that Planned Parenthood is about women's health is one of the big lies of our day. It is about profiting from death, not only by the abortion itself but also the selling of body parts like an auto salvage yard. *How much more depraved can the human heart get?* Well, how about this? Under federal law, killing a pre-born sea turtle is illegal and carries a penalty of \$100,000 fine and one year in prison. The same is true of a

spotted owl. Even more serious, killing a pre-born bald eagle carries a penalty of \$250,000 and two years in prison. But killing a pre-born human being has not only been legal under federal law, but was also funded by the government, and is still applauded as "empowering to women."

Another aspect of this that is rarely mentioned is the damage this procedure does to women. While the industry proudly proclaims abortion as "safe," that is another lie. It is estimated that some 70,000 women die every year due to unsafe abortions, botched abortions, or post abortion complications. Sterility occurs in about 25 percent of all women receiving mid-trimester abortions, hemorrhaging occurs in nearly ten percent of all cases that require transfusions, viral hepatitis occurs in ten percent of all those transfused, and embolisms occur in as many as four percent of all cases. Other complications include: blood clots; chronic abdominal pain; cervical laceration; pelvic inflammatory disease; genital tract infection; cardio respiratory arrest; acute kidney failure; amniotic fluid embolus; and others. Added to that are the mental and emotional scars that result. Are we to think for one moment that this is not God's judgment?

What makes all this so monstrous is that there is no ambiguity at all that this is murder and an obstinate rejection of God's Law. While abortion advocates talk of rape, incest, and other excuses, all of that is nothing but a smoke screen that hides the real issue, which is *abortion on demand*. The plain fact is that not only does simple common sense (which has also vanished in this country) tell us that life begins at conception and simply develops from there. Of course it does. This is "a no brainer." To argue otherwise simply proves one's obstinate rebellion.

Scripture, however, could not be clearer. Before Jacob and Esau were even born, God said to Rebekah, "Two nations are in thy womb" (Gen. 25:23). Of Jeremiah God declared, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jer. 1:5). Even clearer, in Luke 1:41 and 44, when Elisabeth heard her cousin Mary's voice, the unborn John the Baptist "leaped in [her] womb for joy." Was that just a mass of cells in that womb? No, for he obviously heard the voice. Numerous other Scriptures make this truth glaringly obvious (Judg. 13:7; Job 10:10-12; Pss. 127:3; 139:13-16; Is. 44:24).

Now, perhaps you are thinking, "Why bring all this up? After all, all Christians believe that abortion is murder and therefore always unjustified, right?" On the contrary, and inexplicably, the shocking fact is that not all Christians agree (at least *professing* Christians). That is why I am going into such detail here. Christendom has become so tainted by paganism, so far removed from Scripture, that it no longer resembles true Christianity. For example, some Christian writers actually say, "Well, the Bible doesn't really mention abortion specifically so there is room for debate and discussion." Oh, really? In addition to the verses just cited, have they ever read and applied Proverbs 6:16-19 (emphasis added)?

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and *hands that shed innocent blood*, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren.

It is impossible to be clearer than that. Is there anything on this earth more innocent than a baby in the womb? And is not abortion just one of many examples of a heart that devises wickedness? Such imaginations have, indeed, devised efficient ways of slaughtering babies in today's factories of death. If I may be blunt once again, quite frankly, how can a person be a true Christian that compromises on this issue in any way, shape, or form?

Take the United Methodist Church, for example, which was a founding member of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice in 1973. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) generally takes a pro-choice stance. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) generally avoids taking a position on controversial issues, although in the 1970s the American Friends Service Committee advocated for abortion rights. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has repeatedly affirmed its support for a woman's right to reproductive freedom. Likewise, the United Church of Christ has strongly supported abortion rights since 1971 as a part of their Justice and Witness Ministry. The so-called Community of Christ (which from 1872 to 2001 was known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) recognizes a woman's right in deciding the continuation or termination of a pregnancy. And we could go on.

On the other hand, while the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church, as well as evangelicals and fundamentalists, oppose abortion as a rule, it is still common to hear some of them compromise. They insist, for example, that it is permissible if the life of the mother is threatened or in the cases of rape and incest. Such a view, however, makes no sense. I was shocked to read one book, published by a usually solid Reformed publisher, in which the author tragically uses the word "fetus," which is the typical word used by pro-abortionists to escape the reality that we are talking about a human being. He goes on to write: "If, through physical circumstances, [the fetus] is threatening the antecedent life of its mother, it has, in this way, forfeited its own right to be allowed to continue to live." Now, he does not use any Scripture to support that statement mind you; in fact, he uses not a single Scripture verse in his entire discussion of abortion. He does, however, give an incredulous illustration. He likens that baby to be the same as "a crazed madman threatening someone else with a revolver."<sup>8</sup> How on earth could a Christian equate that innocent life to a criminal with a gun? If I may lovingly say again, "Shame on you."

Another noted evangelical first correctly writes that a baby should not be aborted if it is known that it will have a birth defect, as that "may be a direct gift from God to a family as an instrument for the greater glory of God." Amen! Well said! We totally agree. But he then turns right around and says—also using the word "fetus" and again with no Scriptural support—that "one might justifiably abort a fetus if at any stage there is material aggression against the mother."<sup>9</sup> Wait a moment! *Any* stage? Does that also mean partial birth abortion? That is not only human reasoning but *illogical* reasoning. If a child with a birth defect can be a gift from God, why not this? *Is God sovereign or is He not?* What mother would not willingly give her life for that child *after* he or she was born, so why would she not willingly give her life for that child *to be* born?

I once saw an illustration of this very situation on the evening news. Melissa Smart, a mother in Denver, Colorado, had breast cancer that spread to her lymph system. Her doctors told her that if they aborted the baby they would be able to "treat the cancer more aggressively and possibly save her life."<sup>10</sup> Melissa refused, however, and gave her life for her child. Is that not what a mother does? That is, in fact, the *primal drive* of a mother, but we are seeing that drive disappearing before our eyes. Oh, how far gone our culture is when we see feminists wearing a tee-shirt that proudly proclaims: "I had an abortion!" Woe unto those if they do not repent!

The excuses of rape and incest make even less sense. Such cases are rare, but even if that does occur, is that the baby's fault? Should the baby pay for the criminal's crime? Even the rapist is innocent until proven guilty. Further, the rapist is not even put to death if proven guilty, but the baby is killed outright. Is that justice? Is that moral? Is that even sane?

On a related note, what about the child who has a defect? The facts are that the frustrations of handicapped children are no greater than those of normal children. They adapt and channel their energies into areas in which they can excel. Despite the hardships, countless parents have expressed the blessing handicapped children have been. They are, indeed, very "special."

Again, it is truly appalling when noted Bible teachers ignore the revealed Truth of God. As I studied this issue at length, in fact, I could find few Christian writers who would stand *uncompromisingly* for the Truth. Again, we have become so tainted by the world, that we do not think biblically. Thankfully, I finally did find this wonderfully refreshing statement by R. C. Sproul and rejoiced as I read it:

Abortion is a monstrous evil, and if I know anything about the character of God, I am totally convinced that this is an outrage to Him. From the beginning to the end of sacred Scripture, there is a premium on the sanctity of human life. . . . Many scholars and theologians who are rigorously opposed to abortion-on-demand believe abortion in certain mitigating circumstances and situations to be ethically viable, as in the case of incest, rape, or when the life of the mother is threatened. I would say only a very small minority of theologians would argue that abortion is always wrong and is always sin. I would have to count myself in that very small minority. . . . It [is] still a human life.<sup>11</sup>

Praise the Lord for Sproul's courage to call this *sin*. Indeed, I would dare repeat, abortion, no matter what the reason, is premeditated murder and is a monstrous violation of the sixth commandment that calls down God's judgment.

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<sup>1</sup> D. James Kennedy, *Foundations for Your Faith*, 336 (emphasis in the original).

<sup>2</sup> *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, 71–72 (emphasis added).

<sup>3</sup> Matt. 19:18; 23:31, 35; Mk. 10:19; Lk. 18:20; Rom. 13:9; Jas. 2:11; 4:2; 5:6. See also the Septuagint: Ex. 20:13; Deut. 4:42; 5:17.

<sup>4</sup> Orr, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "Molech; Moloch."

<sup>5</sup> Ann Coulter, *Godless: The Church of Liberalism* (New York: Crown Forum, 2006), 78–79.

<sup>6</sup> Jackie Wattles, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/10/business/ceo-letter-abortion-ad-new-york-times/index.html>.  
<sup>7</sup> Melanie Israel, "Abortion Is Planned Parenthood's 'Essential' Billion-Dollar Business," *The Heritage Foundation*, <https://www.heritage.org/life/commentary/abortion-planned-parenthoods-essential-billion-dollar-business>.  
<sup>8</sup> David Broughton Knox, *Not By Bread Alone: God's Word on Present Issues* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 119.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Ryrie, *Biblical Answers to Contemporary Issues* (Moody Press, 1974, 1991), 84-85.  
<sup>10</sup> KUSA television news (Denver, Colorado).  
<sup>11</sup> R. C. Sproul, *Now, That's a Good Question!* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1996), 451, 455-56.

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