

PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT - Hope-Filled Promise For Aborted, Still-born, and Miscarried Babies

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The Word of God always does more than shine light into the moral issues of the day, showing right from wrong. It also brings hope, healing and freedom. It brings *hope* to those who feel they will never live fully again. And I want to offer *hope* to three different situations today:

a) ***There is hope for those who may have already had an abortion.***

My heart goes out to those who have made the tragic decision to take the life of their pre-born child. The more they think about it, and the longer they live with it, the more they begin to ask "***What have I done?***" Perhaps out of ***fear of an uncertain future*** or perhaps through the very strong ***pressure of some pro-choice organizations*** they rushed into what they thought would be a very easy solution.

A dear lady spoke to me about this very recently. She talked about the guilt she's carried for years for what she did. That's why I wanted to preach this message.

b) ***God's Word also offers hope for people who have planned, prepared and prayed for a baby they never got to keep.***

There is a particular pain in remembering babies who were still-born or lived for only a few hours. They seemed to have barely arrived and were gone. Does the Bible address this? Do we have more to cling to than our own private wishes?

c) ***In a church like ours there are many parents who longed for a baby only to discover that 2, 3, or even 4 months into the pregnancy they miscarried.***

They're left feeling broken and, unexplainably at times, even guilty. They can't stifle the questions: "***Did I do something wrong?***", "***Was this an act of God?***", "***Should I ever get my hopes up again?***"

Is there anything directly from the Scriptures that speaks to these delicate, painful issues? That's what we want to consider today.

1) **LIFE FROM THE MOMENT OF CONCEPTION IS PERMANENT LIFE**

Luke 1:35-44, 56 - "And the angel answered her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God. [36] And behold, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, ***and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren.*** [37] For nothing will be impossible with God.' [38] And Mary said, 'Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her. [39] In those days Mary arose and went with haste into the hill country, to a town in Judah, [40] and she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. [41] And when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, ***the baby leaped in her womb.*** And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit, [42] and she exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! [43] And why is this granted to me that ***the mother of my Lord should come to me?*** [44] For behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy...'[56] And Mary remained with her about three months and returned to her home."

There are some important, easily missed details in this account:

At the same moment the angel announces Mary's supernatural conception she is also told that ***Elizabeth is in***

her sixth month of pregnancy with John (36). Mary goes to see Elizabeth and **Elizabeth recognizes that Mary is carrying the "LORD" in her womb (43).** Mary then **stays with Elizabeth 3 months until John is born (56).**

QUESTION: Just how far along was Mary in her pregnancy when Elizabeth called Mary's baby her **"Lord" (43)**? The text says Mary arose and went immediately to see Elizabeth **"in those days" (39)**. In other words, Mary went to see Elizabeth just as soon as the angel told her of Elizabeth's pregnancy. She went right away.

Why is this so important? It's important because it clearly shows the dignity of persons in the womb much earlier in age than the time when many are aborted and some miscarried. While Mary was only **days** pregnant - while that little, divine life in her womb is only a cluster of a limited number of cells - Elizabeth called the pre-born baby Jesus her **Lord**.

Think about that. His Lordship is genuine and established while He would fit in a thimble. Elizabeth called the life in Mary's womb **"Lord"** at a time when - apart from the words of the angel - Mary may not have even known she was pregnant.

I'm pointing that out **not to infuse guilt** to those who have had an abortion ("**That really was a person, you know**"), nor to increase the remorse of those who have had a miscarriage. I say it to instill **hope**.

I say it to establish the fact of genuine, **permanent** life - the **permanent life of those who have been aborted or miscarried or still-born**. Remember, not only was that a life in the womb long before birth - **it continues**. It continues with the same **eternal** significance as **all** life in the presence of the God who made it.

Listen to me - that child - regardless how small or early in development - still lives. Its young life has had an early **departure** but its life has not been **undone**. There is a real **message of hope here for all**.

- a) **THERE IS HOPE FOR THE MOTHER OF THAT MISCARRIED BABY** - That child did not slip into oblivion just because it slipped from the grip of the mother's womb. Neither its **size** nor its **age** determine its eternal **significance and worth**.

Please hear me. That process of conception wasn't for nothing. Never measure the **value** nor the **meaning** of that life by the unfulfilled dreams **you** had for it on this **earthly scene**.

God establishes persons. God **owns** persons. God has **His** eternal purpose and plan for **all** life and nothing will prevent it being unfolded in His presence.

- b) **THERE IS HOPE FOR THE MOTHER OF AN ABORTED BABY** - Please get this. There is more to enjoy than just **forgiveness** for past sin. As serious as that sin was, there is also **hope** because that small, apparently snuffed out life, is still vibrantly alive before God. That little boy or girl is still **the Lord's**. Your sin didn't **undo** God's highest call on your baby's life. You may still feel **regret**. But your sin hasn't wiped out that child's **eternal joy** in the presence of the Father.
- c) **THERE IS HOPE FOR THOSE GRIEVING PARENTS OF A STILL-BORN BABY** - Remember this as you work through the feelings of being so cruelly and prematurely robbed of that dear son or daughter. **The parting, while early isn't eternal. You will see your offspring again.**

How do we **know** we will meet in heaven? Where do we find some Scriptural hope for meaningful reunion when the life taken is so young? I have long taken comfort from David's profound words at the death of his son in **2 Samuel 12:23** - "**But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me.**"

These are David's words in reply to the confusion of those who saw him getting on with his life after praying so intently for his infant son's healing. His son wasn't healed. What's more, David had to face the additional burden of **knowing** his son died as a direct act of divine judgement on David's sin. In other words, David not only had to deal with the **loss** of his son's life. He had to deal with the **guilt** of knowing it truly was **his fault**. How can that burden be made more manageable?

David says, "I shall go to him"(2 Samuel 12:23). - The question is, of course, **where did David mean?** Where was he going to go to be **with** his departed son? I know the Hebrew language can lean in the direction of David going with his son to **the grave**. I have many scholarly commentaries on my shelf that delight in pointing out that obvious fact. Some translations even steer in that direction.

And if this were the **only** place given where we had to guess on David's view of the after-life we might not know exactly what this text meant. But this **isn't** the only evidence we have. We **know** the grave was not David's expectation of his own eternal future and home.

Surely David meant more than the grave when, in speaking about his own future after death, he said **"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever"**(Psalm 23:6).

These words mean nothing sensible at all if they don't describe some kind of **living fellowship** with his Lord. And this is the same **"house of the Lord"** where David fully expected to see his departed son again.

But the Bible offers another point of solid hope regarding the subject of departed infants:

2) **NO LIFE IS WITHOUT MEANING**

This is true however brief, and however undeveloped that life was in our eyes. We need to find where the Scriptures deal with the **meaning** of life in the womb because the human tendency is to only see meaning in lives where, through the passing of years, we **see that meaning unfold right here on earth**. But the Bible gives a deeper picture of human significance:

Jeremiah 1:5 - "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

I can't even pretend to unfold the mystery of this great text. But clearly, at the very least, it carries one very basic important fact. God assigned a significance to Jeremiah's life **before** anyone else could have ever recognized or appreciated it. In other words, from **God's** perspective, though not **ours**, **purpose was attached to Jeremiah before he arrived on the earthly scene**.

This verse clearly speaks of the particular calling of Jeremiah as a Prophet of God. That was God's **calling** for him. God's calling for me may be different, but His **love** for me **isn't**. He is as committed to **each** of us as He is to **any** of us.

What we get a glimpse at in this text - **only** a glimpse - is the link between a person's **pre-natal** life and his **post-natal** life. We get a peak - **just** a peak - at the process of God's hand on a life in **unbroken continuum**. Death doesn't rob the life of that meaning before God whether it happens in the womb, or at age ten, or twenty, or eighty. **Nothing separates us from the love of God!** There are no age restrictions on those verses.

This brings hope for anyone. God knew the days of each of us before we were ever born. God knew the length of earthly life of your baby before conception ever took place. Worth isn't measured in those terms.

This is so important. O, how people wonder about their **worth**. We have no control over so many things. Some

are born out of wedlock. Some may even be the result of rape or abuse. Remember, the tragedy of the circumstances doesn't undo God's plan for the life in the womb. Do you remember who **Solomon's** mom was? Do you remember the circumstances surrounding his conception? And Solomon was called of God to build the temple - the dwelling place for God among His people.

Whatever the frustration, whatever the pain, the Bible says no life is a waste. No life is wasted with insignificance. Each one lasts. Each one fits into an eternal destiny and plan.

There is still another point of Scriptural hope:

3) **WE WILL MEET AND KNOW EACH OTHER IN HEAVEN**

Of course, when we're dealing with the death of pre-born infants and babies all sorts of questions arise. "My child was miscarried as a tiny bundle of cells. How will I ever know him or her in heaven?"

I think there are several truths to keep in mind:

a) ***The Bible teaches that, in the resurrection, every person will have an actual body.***

Of course, the clearest teaching on the resurrection body comes from the New Testament: **1 Corinthians 15:42-43** - "So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. [43] It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."

The "**it**" Paul is describing in these verses is the **body**. It will be very different, says Paul, but "**it**" will still be a body. It will come out of the grave as the second fruits of the new creation begun in the resurrected body of Christ.

There are, however, a few fascinating texts from the Old Testament as well. There's one I have been thinking about lately, especially as I've been thinking about the death of infants:

Psalms 139:15-16 - "My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. [16] Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, ***the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.***"

What draws me to this text is the way it describes the person **before** any of his days were lived out on earth. - "***...when as yet there were none of them...***" Here we have a glimpse - **just** a glimpse - at the pre-born. And that fits right in with our subject today.

And then there's this fascinating talk about God's "**book**" - "**Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.**"

I don't know what that "**book**" is all about. But I've recently come across a little theory that I like. It was in the 50's that they began to discover that the whole "**blueprint**" of every life was contained in the double spirals of DNA in every single cell. And that message - that "**book**" - contains the **total encoded description of all that physical life will ever look like.**

In other words, what science has discovered is that God has **set aside, stored up, or written down**, what your little miscarried, aborted or still born child **would have looked like at 15, 28, or 69.** He can provide that person with the proper body. And we **know** this is true because He would have done so had the child lived out his or her days on earth anyway.

b) ***There will be a different kind of recognition in heaven.***

Again, the details are sketchy. God doesn't tell us too much about the details of heaven because it would make life here on earth intolerable - like showing a child chocolate cake but telling him he had to first finish his broccoli. But there are glimpses:

Matthew 17:1-5 - "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. [2] And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. [3] ***And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.*** [4] And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, ***I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.***" [5] He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

What Matthew *doesn't* point out is the interesting fact that ***Peter had never seen Moses or Elijah in his whole life.*** He had no way of recognizing them from past remembrance. Yet it seems he immediately ***knew*** who they were.

Somehow, it seems there will be a fuller way of knowing things in heaven - **1 Corinthians 13:12** - "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; ***then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.***" The identity of persons won't be the problem ***there*** it frequently is ***here.***

4) **WHAT ABOUT THE FACT THAT ALL CHILDREN ARE BORN IN SIN, NEEDING REDEMPTION?**

Here I give my own views for your consideration. The problem that arises from our theology is this. We believe in what theologians call "***original sin.***" That is, we believe - I believe - that apart from God's grace ***all*** are, as the Bible so clearly states, "***conceived in sin***" and are helpless to free themselves from its bondage in any way.

If this is true (and I believe the Bible teaches it ***is***) how can infants - infants born in sin - be considered safe with the Lord? Some theologies have particular problems here. There is a common teaching that, before the world was created, or at some point after the Fall, God selected a ***specific number of people*** to be ***elect for salvation.*** Of course, if this is the case, one can only hope his or her child was one of the pre-selected.

I think the Bible offers a better approach. I put great weight behind Paul's words in **Romans chapter 5** - especially **verses 15-16** - "***But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. [16] And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.***"

It is my view that there is a ***universal*** effect through the cross of Christ. I don't mean that everyone is ***saved.*** I mean that everyone is reached with ***sovereign, prevenient, resistible grace*** which ***enables all people to respond to further forms of grace.*** In other words, the atonement reaches all people ***until they responsibly reject God's grace.*** In other words, ***everyone*** who is saved is saved by grace. None make it by their own free will. ***All*** wills must be ***freed*** by sovereign, prevenient grace. And ***no one*** is lost by divine decree.

Let me try to say it this way. To me, if Romans 5 teaches anything, it teaches that the work of Christ Jesus on the cross is ***just as extensive in spreading grace*** as the ***sinful work of Adam and Eve was in spreading sin and guilt*** - "***And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification***"(16).

This is a huge thought. It means that through the prevenient, resistible grace of the cross **grace** is just as original to all people as **sin**. This is not **irresistible** grace. But it is **effective** and **genuine** grace. Infants are safe with Jesus, not because they were not conceived in sin, nor because God overlooks their sinful nature, but because in His **sovereign, powerful grace He has provided for all to be saved**.

In the cross God has genuinely revealed His clearly stated desire is to save **all** people - **1 Timothy 2:3-6** - **“This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [5] For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”**

This desire to save is God’s **real** desire. It’s not a **pretend** desire. It’s not a powerless wish. It’s not an empty **preference**. And God doesn’t just **talk** about this desire to save all. Prevenient, resistible grace is **just as extensive** as the spread of sin. Paul says so. God has powerfully, sovereignly **done** something to save all. Through Christ’s effective death on the cross grace is **automatic** for all infants. Praise God for His provision for all the babies who can rest in His loving grace.