

*The War on Compassion*  
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What an unlikely battlefield is a mother's womb! Once a most secure place, the womb has become a dangerous place. Abortion assaults a sacred, God-created human space and the precious life it contains. The womb is a war zone.

Abortion. I wouldn't touch that with a lead balloon. Or, that went over like a ten-foot pole. Feelings, like metaphors, can become mixed, and there are a lot of mixed feelings, opinions, and behaviors within the Christian community concerning abortion. Is abortion a political issue? Is it a social issue? Is it a Supreme Court issue? Is it an issue of personal privacy and choice? Is it a spiritual issue? Because of this pervasive confusion, many Christian leaders have gone silent. Sadly, "I wouldn't touch the subject of abortion with a ten-foot pole" has become the prevailing stance.

I want to help unscramble the confusion regarding abortion by factoring in a basic, yet overlooked, truth from God's Word. Of course, abortion is a multifaceted issue with political, social, human rights, and biblical implications. I write as a pastor, not as a politician or social worker, and I believe that pastors must recover their voices and speak for God into the dark chaos created by the ugly realities of abortion. The church of Jesus Christ must rise up and declare that, above all else, abortion is a spiritual issue. Abortion is a hostile assault on God Himself. If abortion is supremely about God and human life (in that order), then it is a sin of an unparalleled magnitude for Christian pastors and leaders to remain silent or tentative about it.

Abortion is a war *on* compassion—the very compassion of God—and now is the time for the church to rally and engage in the war *of* compassion. By calling this engagement a war, I do not intend to promote angry, finger-pointing speech or violent, illegal action against people or places where abortions occur. The weapons of our warfare are mighty, and they are totally different than the world's weapons. "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Our weapons are expressions of eternal truth and intentional compassion energized by specific prayers and delivered through practical evangelism.

The question is: why the womb? Why is the human uterus the battleground for such a rapacious war on human life? I was compelled to investigate the spiritual realities bound up in the physical reality of abortion's attack on the womb and the human life it contains.

Why the womb? God, using this question, led me back to a basic biblical truth. The pivotal truth for understanding the contemporary war waged by abortion against compassion is grounded in the Old Testament word "compassion" itself. The Hebrew root word for "compassion" is also the word for "womb." The term is *reham*. The Hebrew word for compassion is *rahamim*. You do not have to be a scholar to notice that the root for both

words “womb” and “compassion” is *rahm*. This truth firmly grounds the abortion issue in the spiritual realm. It shows us that while abortion creates a tragic killing field of human lives, abortion even more is a vicious attack on God. If this is so, then Christian leaders must speak out courageously and compassionately.

With this observation in mind, I searched to discover the connection between the physical organ (womb) and the concept of compassion in the very character of God. “But you, O LORD, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Psalm 86:15). These descriptions of God’s character are repeatedly declared in the Old Testament (see Exodus 34:6; Psalm 103:8; 145:8; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2). Three words used frequently to speak of God’s tender response to human suffering are mercy (*hesed*), grace (*chen*), and compassion (*rahamim*). Of the three words, *rahamim* is the most emotionally charged. For example, we read that “Joseph hurried out for he *was deeply stirred (rahamim)* over his brother, and he sought a place to weep; and he entered his chamber and wept there” (Genesis 43:30, NASB emphasis added). *Rahamim* is a gut-level word; the New Testament Greek word used for compassion is “bowels.” Often the King James Version translated the word literally. For example, “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his *bowels* of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17 emphasis added).

While abortion is inescapably a flesh-and-blood issue, Christians do not wrestle against flesh and blood in their efforts to stop abortion. Behind the tragic dynamics of abortion is a forceful enemy the Bible calls the devil, the deceiver, Satan (Revelation 20:2). This enemy of God influences human beings to not only destroy innocent preborn human lives, but to also viciously attack the very character of God. To these spiritual dimensions of abortion, Christian pastors, leaders, and teachers must recover their voices and speak with compassion and conviction.

Why has the womb become a war zone? There are at least three answers to the question.

First, the womb is a metaphor used to describe the compassionate grace of God. Every mother’s womb nurturing a preborn child is a vivid declaration to Satan that God exists, and that he exists as a gracious, forgiving Being. One Hebrew scholar writes that “...*rahm* and its derivatives belong to the realm of grace and hope . . .” Satan, aware that the womb symbolizes grace and hope, has engineered a ghastly, bloody assault on the womb. The same scholar continues, “. . . as a place of care and protection, the womb is a metaphor of divine compassion.” \*

Satan cannot get directly at God to do God any harm. The devil knows that he is doomed just because God exists. He lurks about and seizes on the place, *the symbolic place*, of God’s grace and compassion in this world. That place is a mother’s womb. This antagonism is ancient and is evidence of the curse God put on the serpent [Satan] when God said, “I will put enmity between you and the woman . . .” (Genesis 3:15). Satan, using unwitting human agents, unleashes a vengeance against not only the tiny human life bearing God’s image, but that God-designed place where that life is nurtured and protected.

Despite the circumstances surrounding conception, whenever a woman in a crisis pregnancy chooses to nurture her baby, not abort it, that woman has chosen to act in a God-like way. God creates life, sustains life, and protects life. God is gracious and offers hope. To decide to nurture her preborn baby is also gracious decision and offers hope. Behind the abortionists who destroy preborn children is a fierce demonic being. Abortionists exist “to steal, to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10) human lives. Jesus Christ always comes to offer life, life to the full. The spiritual war on compassion is very real.

Whenever an abortion-vulnerable woman sees a model or medical drawing of the uterus containing the baby, she is seeing the precise biblical symbol of God as a gracious and hope-giving Being; the womb as the physical expression of God’s love, protection, and nurture. While the woman faces a very weighty choice—to keep or abort her child—the choice she makes will reflect either God or Satan, life or death, good or evil. This is an undeniable spiritual aspect of the abortion crisis.

Second, the womb speaks of human beings, infants, at their most vulnerable time of need for tender care. Modern medical technology has brought the once dark, silent battlefield of the womb into brilliant light. The Enemy of God and of human beings who bear God’s image desperately wants the womb to abandon its precious passenger. Abortion is well-suited to this diabolical plan.

Many of us recall the childhood fear when a few bullies ruled the playground. What do bullies do? They always pick on the little kids. Satan is the arch-bully and he chooses to pick on children at their weakest, most fragile time. God, on the other hand, is a bodyguard, and we see his protective hand in the way he created the female body. I talked with a friend who is an obstetrician-gynecologist. He described in detail for me the marvelous, God-designed functions of the womb and the birth processes. The interplay between the remarkable systems of the female body is God’s way of guarding a child in its most defenseless state. The doctor went on to explain that once those intricate systems are activated by conception and then suddenly and violently stopped by an abortion, the effect is like driving a finely-tuned Ferrari at high speed into a brick wall. The damage is inescapable and, for the preborn child, irreversible.

The womb symbolizes that, yes, God is gracious and slow to anger. God is also loving and forgiving. This means, yes, that the actions of the abortionists *are forgivable sins*. Prayer is a supreme resource that God will use to open the eyes of abortionists who blindly attack an innocent human being. We Christians should have real hope that the killing will stop. Let us pray for that result!

We do not come against the Goliath of abortion while draped clumsily with Saul’s armor as David was asked to do. David rejected the world’s weapons and told Goliath, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you *in the name of the Lord Almighty*, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied” (1 Samuel 17:45, emphasis added). Abortion defies God in two very serious ways: abortion destroys an image-bearer of God (the baby in utero). Abortion also turns the womb, a symbol of God’s

nurturing love and grace, into a tomb. A place of thriving life becomes a place of traumatic death.

As God is slow to anger and abounding love, so we his people must be like him. As God's holy people, we must think, speak, and act in holy ways. *Holy ways will be healthy ways, hope-giving ways, healing ways.* Intercessory prayer is a holy gift to those in the abortion industry who are unwitting agents for the adversary of God. Along with prayer, we offer hope, both in gospel words and compassionate works, that demonstrates the love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the supernatural power that can end abortion as it is supplemented by political laws and social reforms. We come against abortion in the name of Lord Almighty. These, then, are our weapons of compassion: prayer and the gospel of Jesus Christ. These weapons are mocked by the world, but they are mighty for demolishing "every pretension that sets itself against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Third, as we return to the question of why Satan wants the womb to forget its treasure, the womb carries those capable of defeating God's enemies and demolishing their destructive schemes. Satan hates human beings because Satan is deeply fearful of human beings. All his demonic bluster and scheming is a cover for his terror of human beings. Satan hates the womb because the womb protects and then projects into the world those capable of ending Satan's destructive cause. God told Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you . . ." (Jeremiah 1:5). Jeremiah rose up as a voice in his generation to speak against the specific evils of his day. Paul, in Galatians 1:15, writes, "But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb by his grace . . ." Paul lived in an empire where infanticide was legal. The love of God announced by Paul in the gospel compelled the early church to seek and nurture newborn abandoned infants left at the city gates and in the garbage dumps.\*\* And it is Paul who described Jesus' great defeat of Satan at the cross: "And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Colossians 2:15).

Isaiah gives us a most telling statement about the power of the womb. In a passage prophesying the coming Messiah, Isaiah reports the future Deliverer's words, "And now the Lord says - he who formed me in the womb to be his servant . . ." (Isaiah 49:5). This passage about the servant was fulfilled by Jesus Christ who was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin girl named Mary (Luke 1:30- 31). Jesus fulfills the promise that the ancient enmity between Satan and the woman will end when the One comes who will crush the serpent's head (see Genesis 3:15). Satan hates the human race because the human race will spell his doom. Let's grasp the triumphant truth that Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome. Paul, knowing that Christ joyfully shares his victory over Satan with all the redeemed, wrote, "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet" (Romans 6:20). Not under God's feet; under *your* feet!

Imagine every human spared from abortion by the loving truth offered by a faithful Christian becoming a life that God intends to use to crush Satan. Imagine a generation of people growing up and learning that their lives were spared through prayer and the gospel of Jesus Christ, weapons of compassion that prevented their deaths. Imagine these lives,

spared in the wonderful and unpredictable sovereignty of God, being raised up to become agents whom God will use to stop abortion in our lifetime. Nobody in Israel believed Goliath would fall except an overlooked shepherd boy. His weapon was not a sling and one smooth stone. Let us not make that mistake. No, by his own admission, David declared that his weapon was “the name of the Lord Almighty.” The weapons that will win the abortion war are not great counsel, effective literature, and practical material goods (diapers, formula, etc.). No. These are the equivalent of David’s five smooth stones. Our winning weapon is the same as David’s—the Name. We use that weapon best as we give ourselves to prayer in that Name and speak and live out the gospel in that Name. Only then will the giant, bellowing Goliath called abortion fall before our eyes.

Dan was raised by adoptive parents and attended a church I served. His birth mother, an ascending, beautiful movie star in Hollywood, conceived him and faced a crisis - the agonizing choice of career or child. Those in Hollywood responsible for her career were willing to fly her to Mexico for an abortion which was still illegal in the USA in the 1960s. Because of some lingering moral principles in her life, she decided to preserve the life of her son. She gave him up for adoption only after investigating a family that was, first of all, stable and, secondly, church-going.

At age 36, Dan located his birth mother and spoke to her for the first time. She told Dan that every year on his birthday she made a chocolate cake with candles and privately remembered his birthday. She would sit and wonder about his life. No one knew about her hidden celebrations. Dan thanked her for her decision to give him life. He also went on to tell her about Jesus Christ and the offer of eternal life. He believed that God was up to something very good in his big and new extended biological family. Dan worked with the teen ministry of our church. God used Dan to communicate his truth to many young people. Dan, who was spared from abortion and pursued by a loving Father, served the cause of Christ.

Imagine now that Dan is joined by thousands of preborn boys and girls previously spared from abortion. They grow to become God's army to wage *a war of compassion* against the forces behind abortion. Not a war of angry protests or violent actions, but a war **of** compassion energized by prayer and the gospel.

Is abortion a spiritual concern? I am convinced more than ever that it is. Abortion is a direct assault on the God we worship. Every Christian leader and church needs to unite as never before, across communities and around the world, to proclaim and protect the sacredness of all human life—from the preborn to the aged and dying.

No longer can we say, “Abortion: I wouldn't touch that issue with a ten-foot pole.” Abortionists are ravaging human lives and mothers’ wombs. They are attacking on an unlikely battlefield—the one location on Earth that is the God-designed symbol of his grace and his hope. How can we remain silent?

\* References to the Hebrew word *rehem* are from The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis, Vol. 3, 1093-1097.

\*\*<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/geneveith/2010/11/how-christianity-conquered-pagan-culture/>

(All scripture quoted, unless otherwise noted, was taken from The New International Version Bible.)