

Restoring the Cradle of Liberty  
by Tony Perkins  
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[\_The following is a speech delivered by Tony Perkins to the Bakersfield Pregnancy Center\'s [1] "Hope Has a Name" Annual Benefit Banquet on Tuesday, January 25, 2011 at the Bakersfield First Assembly of God Church, Bakersfield, CA\_]

As a nation – and maybe it’s in our nature as Americans – we like to be the first. Tiny Delaware crows about being the first state to ratify the Constitution. Today it’s more likely to be the first place you send your credit card payment.

And Bakersfield is no different. I understand that there’s been a controversial competition going on between this city and the cities of Fresno and Merced about where the first leg of the state’s bullet train will be built. I don’t know which side of that debate you’re on, but wanting to be first just comes naturally to most of us. We’re even here at the \_First\_ Assembly of God.

It’s the same way with mottoes. When I use the phrase, “Cradle of Liberty,” which city in America do you think of? For me, Boston comes to mind. Even a specific place in Boston --- Faneuil Hall. Boston has a pretty good claim to the name, of course, dating to before the Revolution.

Yet “firsts” are not always good things. A few years ago I had the chance to walk most of the Freedom Trail while I was filming some videos in an effort to pass a state marriage amendment in Massachusetts. Massachusetts’s Supreme Court was the \_first\_ state supreme court to strike down marriage.

Other competitors exist for the title, “Cradle of Liberty.” Some residents of New York City have launched an effort to have this designation. New Yorkers wanting to be first – can you believe it? Then there’s the city two hours southwest of New York, the home of Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell, the Continental Congress, and dozens of other landmarks.

You may remember the phrase Cradle of Liberty from Philadelphia because that’s the name adopted by the Boy Scouts Council that lost its meeting place on city land because the Scouts will not admit homosexuals to serve as scout masters.

When you think about it, Philadelphia has a strong claim to be the intellectual birthplace of our nation – a political Cradle of Liberty.

Well, we had some news from Philadelphia last week that tells us a great deal about the condition of our land and the state of our liberty. While we have made progress in advancing life, as long as abortionists can continue to carry out their deeds under the cover of government indifference, we remain a nation of broken cradles and shrunken liberty.

I'm sure you've seen the headlines. At a place so wrongly named the, "Women's Medical Society," a man – I can't bring myself to call him a doctor – stands accused of killing one of his patients and as many as hundreds of live-born infants. He is formally charged with murdering seven of these children.

Now, we're gathered for a banquet this evening and for a celebration of Life – of all that the Bakersfield Pregnancy Center does to bring light into the darkness and hope for mothers in need. Because of its work, "Hope" does indeed "have a name."

So I won't dwell too long on the details of what took place in Philadelphia, and what the Grand Jury report says went on in Kermit Gosnell's charnel house. And yes, that is their wording: charnel house. But it is important for us to understand the times in which we live and the challenges we must overcome.

Let me read you just one paragraph from the Grand Jury's 281-page report, which details how Gosnell operated by night to kill babies in the sixth and seventh month of pregnancy:

| There remained, however, a final difficulty. When you perform  
| late-term 'abortions' by inducing labor, you get babies.  
| Live, breathing, squirming babies. By 24 weeks, most babies born  
| prematurely will survive if they receive appropriate medical  
| care. But that was not what the Women's Medical Society was  
| about. Gosnell had a simple solution for the unwanted babies he  
| delivered: he killed them. He didn't call it that. He called  
| it 'ensuring fetal demise.' The way he ensured fetal demise  
| was by sticking scissors into the back of the baby's neck and  
| cutting the spinal cord. He called that 'snipping'.

Ladies and gentlemen, 38 years after the legal crime called Roe v. Wade, this is what has become of one of our Cradles of Liberty. What Gosnell stands accused of doing is nothing short of a “total birth abortion.” Liberty has become a barbaric license to crush the very cradle and with it our future.

As appalling as all this is, what is more appalling is the number of government officials who knew that this – and other kinds of mayhem and fraud - were going on and did nothing about it.

We’ve read the New Testament and know how the Lord looks upon the high and mighty who passed by the man who fell among robbers and was beaten within an inch of his life.

In Pennsylvania, a state ranked as having the some of the most pro-life laws in the nation, this house of horrors has operated without interference since 1993. Since 1993. Visitors to the Women’s Medical Society reported it to health authorities many times, we’re told. Gosnell continued to kill human beings and shred all record of their births. No one followed up.

We must demand that officials in Pennsylvania get to the bottom of these crimes. Anyone who buried these citizen reports, just like those who buried or burned the bodies of babies, should be found, fired, and prosecuted under the law.

But ladies and gentlemen, taking these remedial steps will not get us to the root of the problem. The root of the problem is that we as a nation have forgotten our heritage. We have turned our back on God, the God who our Founders knew gave us Life and Liberty, as Thomas Jefferson said, at the same time. And from the beginning of time, in His holy Word, our God has told us that He values life from the instant of its creation in the womb. Why? Because each human being is made in His image.

Tonight I ask you to ponder with me, to reflect for a moment, what God means by a Cradle of Liberty.

I remember seeing a poster years ago that was all about celebrating life and welcoming children. It was picture of an African-American boy, two or three years old, standing outside a shack of a house, a cap on his head, suspenders holding up his baggy pants, and a big smile on his face. His parents stood behind him on the porch of the shack, gazing

down at their son. The yard and porch were littered with rusted farm tools. A few chickens pointed in all directions. And the caption said, "I know I'm a somebody, because God doesn't make junk."

This set me to thinking about the cradles in Scripture, and how, almost without fail, God's message is to look past how the cradle is made, how its worth is measured in human terms, and instead to look inside that cradle to see His wondrous work and find the thing of lasting value.

I turned to the Book of Exodus, chapter 2, verses 1 through 3.

| Now a man of the tribe of Levi married a Levite woman, and she  
| became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he  
| was a fine child, she hid him for three months. But when she  
| could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him and  
| coated it with tar and pitch. Then she placed the child in it  
| and put it among the reeds along the bank of the Nile. His  
| sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. Then  
| Pharaoh's daughter went down to the Nile to bathe, and her  
| attendants were walking along the riverbank. She saw the basket  
| among the reeds and sent her female slave to get it. She opened it  
| and saw the baby. He was crying, and she felt sorry for him.  
| "This is one of the Hebrew babies," she said. (NIV)

Papyrus, tar and pitch. You won't find a cradle like that at an upscale Baby Boutique. (Nor at the Bakersfield Pregnancy Center, either!) An observer from the Egyptian social register would look at this account of the infant Moses and call it a "rags-to-riches" story. We know it as something else – a slavery- to-freedom story. Were papyrus, tar and pitch a fit resting place for the towering figure of history who would lead the children of Israel to the verge of the Promised Land? Maybe not by man's standard, but in God's story, yes. Oh, definitely yes.

Flash forward with me to the most famous first resting place in all of human history. The hinge of history. It was a place of straw, crowded with stinking beasts, creviced to the night air. Some cradle.

But laid down there in that foul and unlit quarter was the King of Kings, the son of the living God, the author, lover and fulfiller of our deepest longings. Our truest liberties.

Was this a fit resting place for the figure who towers above all history? Would this impoverished family, far from home, have been seen by the world's potentates, sitting in their marble palaces, as a couple worthy of their honor, much less their hosannas? Would this family whose son had no place to lay his head – would they not have been candidates in the views of the rich and powerful to abandon that child on a windswept hillside? Or leave him to the tender mercies of a false doctor?

Think of poor Joseph. He who could have built a cradle of remarkable beauty had his shop and tools been close at hand, standing there in the dead of night feeling helpless because he had brought his pregnant wife to such a habitation.

Another husband, out on the road, failing to make a reservation.

Was this not a most unpromising beginning?

Yes, and yes again, in the human version of the cradle story. But not in God's story, not in His perfect plan.

I have a final cradle to call to mind tonight. And rather than just ask you to visualize my meaning, I've brought some pictures along with me. These are the smiling faces of the children the world knows as Snowflake Babies. Their earthly parents now are men and women who, with the help of the Nightlight Christian Adoptions, reclaimed them from America's infertility centers.

The cradle of these children was, for months and even years, a stainless steel canister containing liquid nitrogen. Frozen as embryos, suspended, not developing, not dying, they waited. Wanted perhaps, but not now, not yet.

We know that the manger in the Nativity story is sometimes depicted as a cold and forbidding place. But swaddling clothes would be no help at all at the temperature of liquid nitrogen. How cold is that? A tad below negative 320 degrees Fahrenheit. In other words, just a little below Minnesota.

We can ask ourselves, who could choose such a cradle? But that is not the proper question. The proper question is, "How can God use such a cradle?" And in the stories of Scripture and of Snowflake Babies, He has given us an answer of overwhelming warmth.

Tonight you can be a part of spreading the warmth of God's love by partnering with the Bakersfield Pregnancy Center. Through their work and their love and their faithfulness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in the last year alone, more than 100 babies have been rescued from abortion and their mothers have been rescued from the idea that no one cares.

You know, it was Martin Luther who referred to the Bible as "the cradle wherein Christ is laid." What a beautiful image. What a comforting reality. Tonight let's rededicate ourselves to go, time and again, to that cradle, the font of liberty.

And let us pray that our nation will become once more a Cradle of true Liberty. Let us pray that every state and city will soon compete to be the first where the scourge of abortion is no more.

Let us strive to become, maybe for the first time in all of human history, a nation that knows what God can do with even the rudest of cradles. Let us make our real rags-to-riches story the salvation story of leaving the slavery of casual sex and abortion and finding the freedom of a God who does not make junk.

And as we pray let us also work to see the cradle of true liberty restored for all. There is no question in my mind that God is at work in our nation. The question is, will we join Him?

Let us join our hearts and hands in hope that, as Abraham Lincoln said, this nation, under God, will have a new birth of freedom.

Thank you, God bless you, and God bless America.