

“Undoing the Unthinkable: How to End Birth Day Abortion”

Lev. 20:1-8

April 2019 Sermon Starter

INTRODUCTION

The unthinkable is happening across America. On the 46th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* legalizing abortion, Governor Andrew Cuomo (D-N.Y.) began a radical abortion expansion trend across the states by signing into law the Reproductive Health Act, which allows abortion through all stages of pregnancy and removes explicit protections for babies born alive following a failed abortion. The celebration that followed was sickening, with Governor Cuomo and lawmakers cheering and with Cuomo ordering One World Trade Center and other landmarks to be lit up in pink. Unthinkable. Shortly after, Virginia delegate Kathy Tran (D-Va.), who had advocated for the protection of cankerworms (HB 2495), called for the killing of pre-born children, right up until the mother goes into labor. Unthinkable. In defending that Virginia bill that allows abortion up through birth, Governor Ralph Northam (D-Va.) stated what appeared to be an endorsement of letting born alive babies die. Unthinkable. Like dominos, their actions began a trend that has spread throughout state legislatures across the country ushering in a more radical abortion agenda.

Thankfully, U.S. Senator Ben Sasse (R-Neb.) recently called the Senate to vote on the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which sought to protect infants born after a botched abortion. Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) said the bill was “anti-doctor, anti-woman, and anti-family.” The Dr. Hal Lawrence of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists named it a “gross interference into the practice of medicine, putting politicians between women and their trusted doctors.” Senator Sasse captured the clarity of the moment, saying, “I’m going to ask all one hundred senators to come to the floor and be against infanticide. This shouldn’t be complicated.” The legislation had to have 60 votes to pass. But 44 Democrats in the Senate voted no and killed this compassionate legislation. So a baby who survives an abortion can be allowed to die without consequences. Unthinkable.

Main Thought: Infanticide in America is unthinkable, but it can be undone.

Transition: As Solomon said, “there is nothing new under the sun.” Ancient Israel had a problem with infanticide as a part of the worship of an idol called Molech. Let’s look at Lev. 20:1-8.

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 I myself will set my face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given one of his children to Molech, to make my sanctuary unclean and to profane my holy name. 4 And if the people of the land do at all close their eyes to that man when he gives one of his children to Molech, and do not put him to death, 5 then I will set my face against that man and against his clan and will cut them off from among their people, him and all who follow him in whoring after Molech...7 Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the Lord your God. 8 Keep my statutes and do them; I am the Lord who sanctifies you.

As we consider this passage and relate it to what we are confronted with in America today, the first point to make is:

I. THE UNTHINKABLE CAN BE UNDONE IF WE COMPLY WITH GOD'S COMMANDS

Back in chapter 18, there is a similar, but shorter warning to what we find here in Lev. 20: *You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD* (Leviticus 18:21). That's the command. No child sacrifice to Molech. But we need to be clear about just what 20:2 is prohibiting.

Just what did it mean to give a child to Molech? When Moses summarizes some of what is found in Leviticus 20, he declares in Deut. 18:9-11: *"When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. [10] There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer [11] or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead..."*

So the command is a prohibition against child sacrifice to an Ammonite god by burning the child to death on an altar. 12th-century Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki, commenting on Jeremiah 7:31, stated: "Tophet is Moloch, which was made of brass; and they heated him from his lower parts; and his hands being stretched out, and made hot, they put the child between his hands, and it was burnt; when it vehemently cried out; but the priests beat a drum, that the father might not hear the voice of his son, and his heart might not be moved."

Unthinkable...much like abortion today. Do you know what happens to pre-borns who are aborted? Some abortion doctors inject the womb with a saline solution that burns and scalds the baby to death. Others stick a needle through the womb and into the baby's beating heart and inject it with poison that kills the child. Other abortion doctors use a vacuum device that dismembers and sucks the preborn baby's body parts out of the womb. Others use forceps, which the baby struggles to avoid, according to the sonograms. They rip off the limbs, crush the baby's head, pull the body out of the womb, and throw it in the trash! Or they harvest valuable organs before doing so...Thank God partial-birth abortion has been banned, but the other methods are no less inhumane and grisly. And it happens every day in so-called "health clinics" and hospitals across America. Unthinkable!

Since 1973 when surgical abortion was legalized by the Supreme Court, 60 million pre-born babies have been terminated. Let the weight of that hit you: 60 million lives taken...gone. Just think of a catastrophic disaster where the entire populations of California, Arizona, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington are wiped out. Gone! That is what we are talking about. Abortion is the American Holocaust, and it is a moral outrage that ought to make every Christian in this nation rise up in righteous indignation. Is it any wonder why God prohibited the practice of child sacrifice to Molech? In fact, the consequences for doing so were severe.

II. THE UNTHINKABLE CAN BE UNDONE IF WE CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES

Let's now move from the *command* in Lev. 18:21 to the *consequences* of Leviticus 20. The unthinkable can be undone if we consider the consequences. There are three distinct consequences in these verses associated with sacrificing children to Molech:

A. First, Death by Stoning (v 2): God says the penalty for this egregious sin is “stoning with stones” (v 2). So the first consequence was capital punishment by stoning.

B. Second, God will set his face against them (v 3, 5): Look in verses 3 and 5. God will “set [his] face against” both the offending sinner who offers his child, but also those who tolerate this sin. Literally the “hiding of the eye.” Should God’s people “close their eyes” and pretend like they did not see this great evil, turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the cries of the innocents being sacrificed on a fiery altar, they too would incur God’s wrath. In our day, it is a much more sanitized process. We can no longer hear the cries. In fact, in our violence-saturated, death-obsessed culture, reports about abortions right up until birth and even letting an infant die who survives a botched abortion gets little more than a sigh from most of us. We scroll right past the latest abortion outrage in our news feeds. We’ve become inoculated against shock at what is happening in Planned Parenthood clinics. It’s become just another level of coarsening in our culture. But I want you to know that God will also hold us accountable for doing nothing to stop this moral madness. He will set his face against us. But there is yet a third severe consequence.

C. Third, God will cut them off from the community (v 3, 5): God declares, again in verses 3 and 5, that he will “cut off” both the sinner and those who tolerate his sin; that is, he will “cut them off from among their people.” Now, if you simply scan over the rest of this chapter, you will see these same consequences listed for the other violations. Being “cut off” is also mentioned in verses 6, 17, and 18. The death penalty is commanded in verses 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 27. *How* they are to be killed is not always indicated. As we see in verse 2, stoning with stones is listed there as well as in verse 27 and verse 14 prescribes “burning with fire” a man who tries to “shack up” with both a woman and her mother. But what does it mean to be “cut off”? That is one of the obvious questions that arises when thinking about these consequences. This passage isn’t entirely clear. Notice in verse 17 that *“If a man takes [that is, cohabits with, ‘shacks up’ with] his sister, a daughter of his father or a daughter of his mother, and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is a disgrace, and they shall be cut off in the sight of the children of their people.”*

Some scholars think “cut off” means banishment. Some think it means a loss of status and access to the altar, and thus, no atonement. Some think it points to loss in the age to come like you would “cut off” someone’s inheritance. Other believe that “cut off” means a premature death by the hand of God himself. But it says that the offender is to be “cut off in the sight of the people.” So it sounds like a public execution. Whatever it means, this warning was meant to sober a sinner, and turn him or her away from giving in to these specific temptations and sins.

Why does God punish those who tolerate this particular sin of child sacrifice? Life is that precious, especially that of an innocent child. Is the death penalty too severe for those who burn their children as an offering to a false god? Most people, even today, would affirm that sentence, that punishment, for such a wicked and unconscionable act. What is the desired result of such a severe punishment? Deterrence: Deuteronomy 19:19, 20: *“...So you shall purge the evil from your midst. [20] And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you.”*

All of these severe consequences beg the question: Is our Holy God a harsh God? Stay with me for a moment while I make my case. The answer is “no” for two reasons. First, we need to see how the prohibition against child sacrifice and its consequences are connected to the Ten Commandments. These practices are violations of the very first commandment of the Ten: “You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20:3). Of course, these offerings to Molech also involved murder (commandment #6). But that vile act was first an expression of idolatrous worship and therefore unfaithfulness to Yahweh, the God of their fathers, the God who redeemed them, their covenant God. Now, there were other commandments of the Ten Commandments that could be punishable by death, but we should ask, why are the consequences in Lev. 20 so severe?

The second reason I would answer “no” to the charge that God is being too harsh is because of the connection with the Creation itself. We need to go back to Genesis 1 and 2. Think about it: The Creator is God. He spoke everything into existence. We are told specifically in Genesis 1:27 that God made human beings in his image and that he made them “male and female.” It is because of this duality, this complementarity of male and female, that together as husband and wife, they are able to fulfill the very first command God gave to the human family: “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it...*” (Genesis 1:28). And in Genesis 2:22-24, we read about the original marriage, which would serve as the pattern for every marriage and family to come.

So in Genesis 1 and 2, we read about the Creator’s stunning masterpiece of creation, about human beings made in his image, their duality as male and female, their coming together in marriage in the formation of families, and their fulfilling the command to have children, to reproduce and populate the earth. That is part of the pure purpose of God’s grand design in creation. This is what God originally intended. And all of this God declared as “very good” (1:27).

Now consider and contrast the violations described in Leviticus 20 with God’s original purposes and how child sacrifice poisons the purity of what God intended. We are horrified by the idea of child sacrifice, and so we should be. Why is it unthinkable? Because human life is precious. Children are a part of God’s grand design.

So Genesis 1 and 2 give us a much fuller picture of human “life,” something bigger and broader and deeper than any one person. Don’t we discover in these chapters the source of life? The mechanisms of life? The sustaining of life? The nurture of life? The flourishing of life? The purpose of life? Shouldn’t all of it be precious to us? Shouldn’t the destruction of, the defiling of, the dismissing of, the defacing of, the dismantling of God’s design also horrify us? To the point of prayer and action? So why not the death penalty then?

Regardless of what any human government says or does with abortion and infanticide and the consequences of participating in it, God’s penalty for all sin is death...for every sin is a destruction of, a defiling of, a distortion of, a dismissing of, a defacing of, a dismantling of God’s good design. Can you grasp the utter sinfulness of sin, and the sublime sacredness of human life created in the image of God? The more you do, the more you will understand both the severity and the necessity of God’s judgments and the consequences laid out in Lev. 20. So we have considered the command and the consequences, but thirdly...

III. THE UNTHINKABLE CAN BE UNDONE IF WE ANSWER THE CALL TO CONSECRATION

Look at verses 7 and 8. These verses reveal the third critical theme of this chapter: the call to *consecration: Consecrate yourselves, therefore, and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. [8] Keep my statutes and do them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.*

A. Personal and Individual: What is the right response to the revelation of both God's good design and sin's poisonous path? It is separation—separation from a wayward world, and separation to God and his good purposes. Remember how Peter quoted from Leviticus in 1 Peter 1:16, “Be holy, for I am holy.” But did you notice how God both calls and provides in Leviticus 20:7-8? The same verb begins and ends this passage: (v. 7) “consecrate [or sanctify] yourselves,” and “I am the LORD who [consecrates, or] sanctifies you.” Paul puts it this way in Phil. 2:12b-14: “[W]ork out your own salvation with fear and trembling, (v. 13) for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” Now why is that important? It's important because holiness is not just God's will. Wonderfully, it is ultimately his work.

See, in Leviticus 20, verses 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 27 we find another phrase repeatedly, “his blood is upon him.” That simply means, as one translation puts it, “his guilt is his own.” That's bad news for sinners like us, isn't it? But the Good News is that in the Cross of Christ that God declares, “Your blood is upon Him.” In other words, because of the cross, “your guilt is now his.” This is just one of the threads in this chapter leading us to Christ.

You see, the severity of sin's ultimate consequences are reflected in the severity of sin's ultimate cure. In our rebellion, we try to destroy, defile, distort, dismiss, deface, and dismantle the Creator's design and purpose—whether unwittingly or willfully. Regardless, the sentence is death. Yet because God loves us so much, he gave up his only son Jesus to take our place and our punishment. It was Jesus who was “put to death” on a cross (1 Pet. 3:18), who was “cut off” (Is. 53:8)—the most severe sentence of all, so that he could forgive us of our sins... all of them. It doesn't matter what you've done, even if you have gotten an abortion or urged someone to get one. His blood covers our multitude of sins. There is grace, mercy, and forgiveness for all at the foot of the cross.

And because he died for us, because he rose again and defeated death, because he returned to the right hand of the Father and poured out his Holy Spirit, we are sanctified, we are set apart “in him” to live for him. And out of that glorious reality, and only from that reality, we find the power to live that “set apart” kind of life. So what God commands, he also graciously provides.

But back to the question: Is God's holiness harsh? No. Sin is harsh. Its fruit is incredibly bitter, far worse than we can imagine. In a word, it is: *Unthinkable*. Why? Because God is infinitely holy and immeasurably loving, far more than we can understand, and that sacredness demands a severe sentence for sin. Only through God's word and God's Spirit can we see and accept the true ugliness of our sin. And as we do, may God help us to flee to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith and appropriate his life-giving power to live out the command: “Be holy for I am holy.” That's the application personally and individually.

B. National and Cultural: But there is not only a personal and individual dimension to the call to consecration. There is also a national and cultural dimension to this. In this moment in America, when little babies, pre-born and born, are being sacrificed on the altar of convenience... In this moment of devilish darkness, moral madness, and spiritual insanity, it demands a response from the church, the people of God collectively. And if we don't make an effort, we will answer for it. If God's people were judged for turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the cries of infants being sacrificed to Molech, do you think he will hold us guiltless? No. In fact, his word says so. Prov. 24:11-12 commands: "Rescue those being led away to death, hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "We knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?"

God will not overlook the fact that we are overlooking such a great evil. He expects us to engage. How can we undo the unthinkable and put an end to birth day abortion? Well, first of all, we need to:

1. *Pray* that the dignity of every human life will be respected and protected from conception to natural death, even after an attempt to abort a baby. Join the End Birth Day Abortion effort and we will send a reminder to pray. That leads me to the second thing we can do and that is:

2. *Support* the End Birth Day Abortion Campaign: For every \$9 donation you make to End Birth Day Abortion, Family Research Council will deliver one baby hat on your behalf to Congress. Show your support for the lives of all babies born alive by sending a hat to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.)! I want to urge you to send this powerful reminder to Congress that all human life is valued and every baby should be welcomed, and to pray for all babies who are born alive, despite efforts to abort them, and for our elected representatives who have the power to protect them. Visit EndBirthDayAbortion.com/Church to send a hat.

3. *Contact* your Representative (and Senators) by calling the U.S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 or visit FRC.org and click on the "More" tab, then "Contact Officials." Urge your U.S. Representative to support the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. Let your Senators know how you feel about their recent vote.

Unfortunately, the current laws in place don't protect all infants from being allowed to die or even from being killed outside the womb, and critical laws to prevent infanticide are not being passed. It's imperative to remind Congress that every baby should be welcomed into the world with a hat to keep them warm, not to be callously left to die. Visit EndBirthDayAbortion.com/Church. Send a hat for \$9!

4. *Affirm* President Trump for not only appointing pro-life Justices and judges to the courts, but also pointing out this great evil of abortion and infanticide and calling for an end to this moral madness: whitehouse.gov/contact. Despite his flaws, he has been the most vocal pro-life president in memory. We should affirm that. Finally, we should:

5. *Educate* ourselves on pro-life arguments. Read the best arguments from science, the law, and women's rights to advance the pro-life case against abortion to your friends, family, and neighbors. To find out more about how to winsomely promote the pro-life cause in your daily life, check out FRC.org/life. Another thing you can do is go the see

the movie “Unplanned,” which is a real life story about Abby Johnson, who ran a Planned Parenthood Clinic but who participated in an abortion and it grieved her so much that she quit and has become a passionate advocate for life.

CONCLUSION

Can the “unthinkable” be “undone?” Yes! We have seen great evils undone before. It took a bloody Civil War, but the scourge of slavery was stopped in America. It took a World War, but the Nazi Holocaust of 6 million Jews was stopped in Europe. I believe that after 60 million pre-born babies have died in the American Holocaust, that abortion and infanticide can be stopped if God’s people will rise up, stand up, and speak up. That moment has come and the time is now!

Be encouraged: we are seeing the unthinkable already being undone around the nation. Just since New York state set this awful agenda in motion in January, there has been a dramatic shift in public opinion, with a [17-point jump](#) in the number of people who self-identify as pro-life. Radical legislation furthering expansion of abortion has been defeated in Virginia and [New Mexico](#) and legislation has been withdrawn in Maine and Maryland. On the other hand, we are seeing pro-life legislation being passed in multiple states. Can it happen in the U.S. House of Representatives? Absolutely. But it won’t happen without prayer and fasting and a lot of hard work by God’s people... by you and me. We’ve heard God’s command, we’ve taken seriously the consequences, but now we need to be busy about consecration.

You know I’ve spent a good deal of time relating how ancient Israel had a problem with infanticide as a part of the worship of an idol called Molech. I want to conclude with what God’s people did about it to end it. Go back with me to the dark days of King Manasseh of Judah in 2 Kings 21. Following good King Hezekiah, Manasseh’s 55 years on the throne was a reign of terror and of unparalleled evil. He set up pagan altars in the House of God. He practiced sorcery and divination. He even offered his son to be burned as a sacrifice to Molech (21:6). The Bible sums up his reign in verse 16: “Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another...” When he died, his son Amon became king and followed in his footsteps until he was assassinated after just 2 years. So they made his son Josiah the king, at only 8 years old.

And when King Josiah turned 18, he led a return to the one true God. He ordered the Temple of the Lord to be repaired, and when they were cleaning it out, they found the lost Book of the Law. Many think it was Deuteronomy. They brought it to the king and it was read in his presence. And when this teenage king heard God’s clear commands and the consequences of blessings for obedience and judgment for disobedience, he was cut to the heart, tore his clothes, wept with repentance, and called for prayers of intercession and a word from the Lord. “For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us” he said (22:13).

Then, this 18-year-old king called all the people to the Temple of the Lord from the least to the greatest (23:2), read the commands of the Lord from the book of the law, including the consequences of obedience and disobedience, and challenged them to renew the covenant before the Lord. Then King Josiah set in motion a sweeping consecration. He ruthlessly removed everything offensive to God. He hauled out the articles of idol worship and burned them to an ash, he tore down the idols and smashed them to dust,

he demolished the houses of cult prostitution, he ran off the pagan priests, and he ripped their altars down and desecrated them with dead men's bones. In the midst of this consecration in Israel is this verse: *"And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech"* (2 Kings 23:10). Young King Josiah put a stop to child sacrifice.

Is the call to consecration any less for Christians in America today? First things first. We need to fall on our knees in humble repentance and fervently pray to Almighty God that he will change the direction of this nation that has launched out into a sea of innocent blood. We once held to the God-given right to life in this nation, but that day passed and night descended. And yet, I believe a new day for life may be on the horizon. Our nation is not yet past saving. Nothing is impossible with God. Pray that even as slavery ended in America, even as the Jewish Holocaust ended, that the American Holocaust might end, that the evils of abortion and even infanticide might end. Then let's get up off our knees, having heard God's command and considered the consequences, to answer the call to consecrate ourselves to undo the unthinkable. So help us God!

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