

## THE ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

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On Friday December 14, 2012 an unspeakable evil and merciless act of violence was committed in this country. Innocent children with futures full of unlimited potential were senselessly and barbarically murdered. Boys and girls whose lives were brimming with promise; who might have been future leaders; future moms and dads; who might have discovered cures for diseases and made enormous contributions to humanity; who had love and joy to share with their families; had their lives suddenly and brutally brought to an end. Even more shocking is that these precious innocent lives were mercilessly cut short while they were in what was thought to be one of the safest places for a child. It should shock us, grieve us, and fill us with moral outrage. People are groping for answers; asking how something like this can happen; what kind of person would do this to innocent, helpless children.

Tragically this event has become all too common in our nation; so common in fact that virtually everyone reading this will think I am referring to the horrific shooting which took place at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut. But what I refer to is so common that what occurred on December 14<sup>th</sup> in Newtown, Connecticut takes place everyday in this nation, only on a much larger scale. Everyday 4000 innocent children are brutally and ruthlessly murdered in this nation without anyone noticing or without it eliciting the slightest bit of moral outrage. Instead it is insisted on as a constitutional right of a woman to be able to murder her child. What kind of person would mercilessly and methodically shoot twenty small children in a school? The same kind that would mercilessly and methodically murder a child in what should be the safest place on earth; its mother's womb.

Where is the grief, the shock, the tears, and the moral outrage over the 4000 babies brutally murdered everyday and thoughtlessly discarded in a way that does not even acknowledge their humanity? How hypocritical and insincere is the shock and horror expressed over the shootings in Connecticut by those who at the same time defend and support the atrocity of abortion. How disingenuous and deceptive are the tears and moral outrage over this shooting by those who promote the right to have helpless children savagely and brutally ripped from their mother's womb and sacrificed on their altar of self-gratification and self-indulgence.

The overwhelming response to the Sandy Hook shootings has been one of shock, trauma, grief, and disbelief at their senseless and heartless nature. And we should be shocked and grieved. We should ask why and how. The families who have been

traumatized by this evil need our prayers, compassion, and biblical counsel on a long term basis. But the response also strikingly illustrates how blind and double-minded people are. Why are they shocked by this but not by the murder of 4000 babies a day? Why are people morally outraged over this but not by abortion? Why is one considered legitimate and another not? On what grounds and by what standard is one judged morally acceptable and the other not? The only answer is that man continues to place himself in the position of being the ultimate determiner of right and wrong without any objective moral foundation on which to base his conclusions; man determines what is right in his own eyes.

People will look for answers to the senseless tragedy at Sandy Hook but will never find them because they reject the only answer that makes sense. And in rejecting the answer to the problem they reject the solution and thereby perpetuate the problem. The problem is sin; the depravity of the human heart; man's total fixation on self, self-idolatry, self-sufficient independence, and self-gratification, and the only solution is the gospel and submission to God's government. But man will never consent to live in submission to God and His word, and so events like Sandy Hook and the atrocity of abortion will continue despite all the superficial attempts to regulate man's natural bent toward what is evil. Man can regulate the sale and availability of guns, but he cannot change the human heart, and until the heart is changed and people return to God's moral principles they will continue to sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. History has proven this to be so time and time again. God is not mocked.

In 586 B.C. God used the ruthless superpower of Babylon to destroy the southern kingdom of Judah, including the magnificent temple constructed by Solomon, the entire city of Jerusalem, and reduced the city wall to rubble, burned its gates, and exiled most of the inhabitants of Judah into Babylonian captivity (Jer. 52:12-14). God's devastating wrath fell on Judah primarily as a result of the despicable wickedness introduced and practiced by one of Judah's last kings, Manasseh. Second Kings 21:9 tells us that *Manasseh seduced them (i.e. the people of Judah) to do evil more than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel. Then Manasseh compounded all his other evils by shedding very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, (2 Kings 21:16). Not even Manasseh's conversion (2 Chronicles 33:10-20), nor the prolific religious reforms of Josiah could stem the tide of Judah's lust for blood, immorality, and idolatry or turn away God's imminent judgment (2 Kings 23:25, 26). The prophet Jeremiah warned Judah of God's impending wrath and judgment as well as the reason, And I shall make them an object of horror among all the kingdoms of the earth because of Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, for what he did in Jerusalem (Jeremiah 15:4; cf. 2 Kings 24:3). God's wrath is especially kindled against those who prey on the weakest of*

society, and no one is more weak and helpless than a baby. For almost forty years America has filled itself from one end to another with the blood of millions of innocent babies. Can anyone honestly presume that America is not now under the wrath of a holy and righteous God, or more deserving of it? All idols demand sacrifice. This nation's obsession with its idolatrous worship of sexual gratification, even to the point of offering child sacrifices to its idol, makes Manasseh's atrocities seem mild in comparison.

The testimony of Scripture is unequivocally clear concerning the genesis of human life; all human life begins at conception (Ps 139:13, 14; Job 10:9-11; 31:15; Jer 1:5). Not only is this clear biblically, but medical science has long removed any doubt that a child possesses full personhood from the moment of conception. Any attempt to dehumanize a child during any stage of its development, or to devalue it by equating it with a lump of tissue is nothing short of fraudulent, deceitful, and demonic pro-abortion propaganda intended to desensitize people to the fact that a baby is being murdered for profit. Scripture is equally clear that the taking of innocent human life is murder (Gn 9:6; Ex 20:13; Pv 6:16, 17). Abortion is the taking of innocent human life and is therefore murder, and all who are involved in abortion, either directly as are the mother and the abortionist, or indirectly by means of promoting, defending, or profiting from abortion, are by definition murderers. They are guilty of shedding innocent blood and as such are under the judgment and wrath of God (2 Kg 24:4; Ps 106:37, 38; Jer 22:17). Their actions are no less horrific and morally repugnant than those of the shooter in Newtown, Connecticut. Both are the result of Satan's scheming since he is a murderer and the father of murderers. It is impossible to make a logical and moral distinction between the two.

Many people who consider themselves to be pro-life are willing to make allowances for abortion in cases of rape, incest, or threat to the life of the mother. While there is a tremendous need to be very compassionate and understanding to these victims of abuse and to those with potential health risks, Scripture contains no exception clause. This view devalues the baby's life based on the circumstances of its conception, denies the sovereignty of God in bringing about the child's conception, and violates God's commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. Scripture is clear that God is the giver of all life, regardless of the circumstances of its conception (Gn 21:1, 2; 25:21; 30:22; 1 Sm 1:19, 20). Some want to make an exception in cases where the child may have a birth defect of one sort or another. But everyone is born with some defect. It is just a matter of degree. Some even suggest that God would never intentionally cause a child to have a birth defect, but this again denies the clear teaching of Scripture. In response to Moses' protestations at being chosen by God as Israel's deliverer, God said, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes him dumb or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I,

the Lord+(Ex 4:11). When questioned by His disciples as to the reason a certain man had been born blind, Jesus answered it was so that God might be glorified in his healing (Jn 9:2, 3). Nevertheless, the cases of abortion in which these exceptional circumstances would apply are extremely rare. The fact is, the vast majority of abortions are carried out for self-centered reasons of personal convenience. Almost half of all abortions are repeats. Abortion is the sacrificing of children on the altar of our most cherished idol . ourselves . and one of the most heinous manifestations of raw, unbridled paganism. We live in a culture where one out of every three pregnancies now ends in abortion, and in some areas of the country the abortion rate exceeds the birth rate. Abortion is one of the largest unregulated industries in the United States, and one of the most common elective surgical procedures performed today. Planned Parenthood has designated pregnancy as the second most common sexually transmitted disease. Abortion has been enshrined in the platform of one of our nation's major political parties. The Holocaust of Nazi Germany pales in comparison to the number of innocent children who have been murdered in order to appease our society's voracious lust for sexual self-gratification without consequences. The sheer numbers are staggering and mind numbing. People can and have gone to jail for doing to a dog what an abortionist does to a baby. The public's general acceptance and tolerance of unrestricted abortion is proof that America is now a Romans 1:18-32 nation and under the wrath of God.

But unless we are tempted to feel self-righteous, Jesus said that to speak evil against anyone is the equivalent of murder (Matthew 5:21, 22). You have murdered them in your heart. Every sinner is guilty of murder. This is not to say that speaking evil of someone is the moral equivalent of actual physical murder. But in the eyes of God it is the attitude of the heart that makes us guilty just as much as the physical action, because it is from the heart that all sin originates. As horrendous and wicked as abortion is, as wicked and evil the shootings at Sandy Hook, it is a symptom of a much larger problem, just as Israel's sacrifice of their children on the altar of Molek was an indication of a much deeper issue.

People are asking how we can prevent what occurred in Newtown, CT from ever happening again, and the answer is we cannot. People do not like the consequences of sin, but they refuse to give up the sin they love so much, even when that sin leads to the murder of their children. People will not tolerate the restrictions that God's commandments and principles would impose on their life, because it is these which run contrary to man's greatest love; his idols of self and the world. So as a society we are willing to murder babies in their mother's womb, sometimes even outside the womb, in order to accommodate a man and woman's sinful desire to fornicate at will. We will shift the blame for tragedies like Sandy Hook to the availability of an inanimate object, and mitigate the evil of the shooter by blaming his actions on some psychological or

psychiatric trauma or imbalance rather than on the evil which indwells the human heart and the proliferation of graphically violent and wicked video games, movies, and internet sites that feed man's inherently evil nature.

The real problem is sin, which at its core is rebellion against God. The problem is not particular sins, but sin itself. There is abundant grace at the foot of the cross, but sin must be recognized as sin before there is conviction and repentance. The trouble with so much preaching today is that it either ignores sin altogether, or focuses on particular sins. And in focusing on particular sins, it often demonizes the people who champion the sins, thereby violating Jesus' clear command against being hatefully angry toward another, while at the same time prejudicing sinners against the gospel. As Christians we are to be angry with sin, not the sinner. Why do we expect a sinner to act in a way contrary to who they are, even when that sin is expressed in actions as heinous as abortion and Sandy Hook? They have no capability to be anything other than what they are (Romans 8:7), and were it not for God's restraining grace on mankind we would all be killing each other at will. We are to feel compassion and sorrow for their horribly lost condition and seek to rescue them from their spiritual blindness. The children murdered by abortion and those murdered in Newtown, CT are in heaven with Jesus, but their murders face eternal conscious torment under God's wrath in a real, literal hell.

Mankind suffers from a deeply rooted, obstinate, spiritual disease which resists any cure offered by man. This disease results in darkness and blindness of mind, especially in things pertaining to God. And this blindness that is in the heart of man is not due to a lack of information or lack of opportunity to know, but from a principle in the heart that hinders man's understanding, especially in things pertaining to spiritual and moral truth. The spiritual nature of abortion is obvious in the simple fact that it is so contrary to a person's natural instincts and affections. So powerful and blinding is this spiritual delusion that it has overpowered the strong natural affection and love people have for their own offspring. Even animals will protect and guard their young, often to the death. But not only is the natural love for one's own child overruled, so is a person's natural aversion to pain and suffering. Abortion is a symptom of the powerful delusion which affects the heart and mind. Once more it proves that man is hopelessly addicted to darkness and instinctively drawn to evil, even after being enlightened by overwhelming truth; furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and *insanity* is in their hearts throughout their lives (Eccl. 9:3b). What could be more insane than people willingly murdering their own offspring for the sake of personal convenience and sexual self-gratification? What could be more insane than thinking any society can reject and spurn God's moral principles or remove the Christian foundation for morality from schools and society and not reap what they sow? The problem lies with the corrupted nature of mankind and his proneness to delusion.

This has been the history of man since his fall into sin. It was true in Noah's day that in his lifetime so soon after the flood in which God destroyed the wicked world, and none were left but those who professed to know God, that Noah's descendants lost the knowledge of God and fell into gross idolatry. How soon after the nation of Israel witnessed their miraculous deliverance from Egyptian slavery and the destruction of Pharaoh's army did they take to worshipping a golden calf? How soon after they witnessed God's miraculous provision in the wilderness did they begin to grumble and complain? When from time to time God sent Israel judges and prophets to rebuke them for their idolatry and call them to repentance, even though sometimes they confessed their foolish delusions, yet they would always go right back to their idolatrous ways. Even when the Light of the world lived among men, men loved the darkness rather than the light and they persisted in their foolish speculations and delusions. Even after many of the Gentiles had been converted from their idolatrous practices and instructed in the pure light of the gospel, many soon fell away from the truth and began propagating anti-Christian superstitions and idolatry. When even some of the Pharisees were coming into the church and professing faith in Jesus, many still insisted on a works based salvation and upset the faith of many true believers with their delusions. After the Reformation when God had restored true gospel light in much of the Christian world, many fell away into heresies, deism, the false teachings of The Enlightenment, Pelagianism, and others into Arianism and Mormonism. Today a great deal of the professing church embraces whatever methodology promises to attract a crowd under the delusion that a crowd is a church, and numbers are an indicator of a successful ministry, and any positive response to religion is genuine salvation. Christianity has become big business and as such is marketed like any other product . by appealing to people's desire for self-gratification. Christianity has become a commodity to be sold in order to gratify man's idolatrous desire for wealth, worldly success, fame, personal comfort, emotional experiences, and narcissistic self-importance.

All this just shows how addicted man is to darkness and how prone he is to blindness and delusion. From time to time God has graciously intervened to lift some people and nations out of their gross spiritual darkness, but it is man's natural tendency to gravitate back to his delusions and darkness, lose all useful light, and sink into the most heinous forms of idolatry, self-worship, and brutality. This darkness that possesses the heart and mind of mankind is also shown by the fact they are so *confident* in their delusions. Untold numbers of professing Christians are confident in their biblical illiteracy and man-made, man-centered theology and confidently embrace any teaching that claims to be Christian. No one thinks they are susceptible to falsehood or predisposed to deception, but the fact is people naturally gravitate to advice and counsel that affirms their lusts and presuppositions (2 Tm 4:3, 4), and reject that which runs contrary to their desires.

The prophet Jeremiah understood this firsthand. When asked by a beleaguered remnant of panicked Jews to pray for the Lord's direction Jeremiah complied, but he also told them, *"For you have only deceived yourselves; for it is you who sent me to the Lord your God, saying, 'Pray for us to the Lord our God; and whatever the Lord our God says, tell us so, and we will do it' (Jer. 42:20). And what was the response of the people to Jeremiah's answer from the Lord? 'You are telling a lie! The Lord our God has not sent you to say, 'You are not to enter Egypt to reside there' we are not going to listen to you" (Jer. 43:2; 44:16: cf Jer. 42-44). People naturally reject that which conflicts with their predetermined course of action, especially if it threatens to deprive them of some great lust or desire or cause them to suffer some hardship. Millions live and die embracing the most bizarre and self-destructive ideals and principles, never doubting that they are right or occupy the moral high ground, even though their ideals have led to the most barbaric, pagan, and inhuman practices, including offering up their own children as a sacrifice to their idols. Scripture is clear; behind every idol is a demon, "They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood" (Psalm 106:37, 38; cf. Dt 32:17; 1 Cor. 10:20; Rv 9:20).*

Moments after the Sandy Hook shootings people were flocking into churches and crying out to God, hoping to understand. Frantic parents were rushing to the school praying that their child would not be among the victims. This is the natural human response to tragedy. People who rarely give God a second thought, who never turn to Him in the course of everyday life, who spurn and reject His commands and principles on a daily basis, cry out to God and expect Him to be merciful to them when they have never once concerned themselves with what God expects of them. Like the people who cried out to Jeremiah in desperation, they only deceive themselves. They have no intention of submitting their life to God's government, forsaking the sin they love, or surrendering control of their life to God. Their only desire is that God would hear their cry for mercy and give them what they ask and accommodate Himself to their lifestyle.

Murder, no matter what form it takes, is at its core a spiritual issue because it is a sin issue. The disease is sin and murder is just one of many symptoms of the disease. There are many forms of cancer which are incurable, such as Multiple Melanoma. Most of the treatment for these cancers consists of alleviating the harmful side effects associated with the cancer in order to make the patient more comfortable, but medical science has yet to develop a cure. When it comes to the disease of sin, to simply try and eliminate some of the more noticeable and tragic side effects only makes a person's path to hell more comfortable and less obvious. To simply mask the symptoms

with a heavy dose of morality and religion does nothing to cure the disease or alter the ultimate outcome . death. Many will simply trade obvious sins for less obvious sins. They will trade external idols for idols of the heart. And what makes our condition the more desperate is that no nation, no religion, no people in the history of the world has ever concocted for themselves an effective and lasting remedy and deliverance from this blindness which is in the heart and mind of man. No example can be given of any people who once they have fallen into gross idolatry and embraced hideous immorality as normal, or any other mistaken religious opinions, that have ever arrived at any remedy of their own, or have of themselves become wiser through their own attempts. When a people or nation rejects God or substitutes a god of their own imagination for the one true God revealed in Scripture and in the person of Jesus Christ, they continue generation after generation growing worse and worse and sinking deeper and deeper into darkness. America is no exception. Many, to be sure have gained freedom from despotism, ignorance, abject poverty, and have conquered enemies that threatened their security and national interests, but no people has ever conquered the blindness of their own hearts. No matter how wise and successful they may be in other things, when it comes to spiritual truth, the things of God, and the worship of their idols, mankind is incapable of distinguishing between true and false, good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust. No where is this more evident than in academia where we would expect to find the highest level of clear thinking. The vast majorities of people who have obtained to the highest levels of scholarship also reject and deny the God of Scripture for the sake of their idols. The delusions and darkness that characterize the rest of mankind also darkens their understanding, excludes them %from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness+(Eph 4:18, 19).

The only way to overcome the evil of abortion, or any other sin, is not by attacking specific sins, but sin itself. The only way to tackle sin is to convert sinners. Only the gospel can convert sinners and bring about the transformation of the whole man. Therefore, the sole business of Christians is to convert sinners, and the means of converting sinners is the gospel. Much of the church has psychologized and euphemized virtually all sin out of existence. When sin is rationalized, justified, and legitimized people no longer consider it sin. No one will repent of sin that has been legitimized, because once it has been legitimized they will never tolerate it being identified for what it is . sin (Jn 3:20). They deny or minimize the disease and are therefore incapable of providing the only cure. For instance, a new book by best-selling author Shannon Ethridge entitled *The Fantasy Fallacy: Exposing the Deeper Meaning behind Sexual Thoughts*, and being heavily marketed in Christian publications, claims that, %fantasies are simply the brain's way of trying to heal itself from unresolved



tragedies and traumas. We mentally compartmentalize our pain to make room for pleasure. So, impure, exploitive, self-indulgent thoughts that pander to our desire for sexual self-gratification are no longer sin, but simply a way the brain attempts to heal itself. No need to forsake and repent of something that is just a normal psychological response to emotional traumas. The author has transformed sin into a virtue.

Much of what passes for evangelism today is just an attempt to manipulate or badger someone into making a decision rather than confront people with their sin. The gospel is viewed through the lens of self-improvement rather than the glory of God. The gospel becomes a divine self-help method where God offers to improve our life in exchange for letting Him have a place among our other idols. Abortion is a sin; the sins of murder and idolatry. But it is not a greater sin than the sin of gossip, lying, spreading strife, etc. (Pv 6:16-19); all are destructive to the soul. It is time for judgment to begin with the household of God (1 Pt 5:17). By all means we should seek to overturn Roe v. Wade. We need more people like William Wilberforce who can oppose an evil without prejudicing unbelievers against the gospel. But how many Christians actively oppose abortion beyond slapping a bumper-sticker on their car or voting pro-life? By opposition I do not mean the militant Randal Terry-type opposition that alienates people from the gospel. But rather, how many Christians actually live what they say they believe? How many actively evangelize unbelievers? What percentages of Christians adopt, or if they are unable to adopt, help fund other couples who want to adopt? How many support crisis pregnancy centers? Has the church created an environment in which a woman could go for help and not feel condemned and judged, or is she told, I'm sorry but we don't get involved in that sort of thing? Rather than thinking her only option is ending the life of her baby, the mother should be shown the love of Christ, be given a support network, evangelized and/or disciplined, and if she does not want the child she should be helped and supported through the process of adoption.

The church needs to realize that the woman is oftentimes a victim of the abortion industry's greed and bloodlust. Many women are pressured, manipulated, and frightened into having an abortion, and the physical, emotional, and psychological consequences of having an abortion are far greater than the consequences for having her child. This is what makes abortion, like all sin, so irrational and self-destructive. In their attempt to avoid the consequences of unbridled fornication, people are willing to commit the sin of murdering their own children, the consequences of which are far more devastating and permanent. No one can avoid the consequences of one sin by committing more sin. This is totally irrational; evil will not deliver those who practice it (Eccl. 8:8c). As Christians it is not what we say, but what we do that is the best indicator of what we truly believe. Sadly in its efforts to attract a crowd much of the church has

ignored man's greatest problem, i.e. sin, and in failing to deal with the problem of sin have become part of the problem rather than the source of the solution.

Abortion is not the problem; it is a symptom of a much deeper problem. To simply treat the symptom is to dance around the edge of the real issue. The only hope is the gospel, but too much pro-life activity is counter-productive in that it alienates and prejudices people against Christianity. As Christians we need to show less militancy and more mercy, less condemnation and more compassion, less self-righteousness and more humility and grace toward all who are ensnared in the darkness and delusions of their own heart and mind. Paul's words to Titus (Titus 3:1-7) are a good reminder for the church today as it seeks to deal with the evil of sin, "Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be uncontentious, gentle, showing every consideration for all men. For we also were once foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. *But* .+; you read the rest. Those two little words, "But God+(Eph 2:4; Tit. 3:4) are all that stands between the Christian and the unbeliever, between heaven and hell as our eternal destiny, between a life of sin and a life devoted to pleasing God, between true worship and idolatry, between darkness and light, between a culture of life and a culture of death.

How can we as a society prevent atrocities like Newtown, CT, and on a larger scale the atrocity of abortion? We can't. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to do evil+(Jer. 13:23). As fallen human beings we do not have the capacity or desire, because people would have to renounce the sin they love. Preventing such violent and horrendous outbursts of human depravity is beyond the scope of human ability. Our only hope is, "But God.+