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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Life Chain Sunday

Selected Scriptures

Prayer: *Father, I just want to again thank you for who you are, thank you for the gift of your Spirit, thank you for the gift of your Son, thank you for the cross. And Father today, we just again, we pray with a heavy heart as to where our country and our culture is and so we are praying for an opportunity to push back in a tiny little way against that. And we pray this morning, Lord, as we are going to be looking at this issue in depth, I just pray that your Holy Spirit would be here, that you would accompany us, that you'd guide us as we walk through this and that you would again be pleased with what you hear. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

I saw a video the other day, it was about -- actually it was about a week ago, it was a video of a rally that was taking place on a college campus. A group of students had set up a spot where they were putting up signs decrying abortion, and their intent, I'm sure, was to engage in some kind of dialogue about the evils of abortion and the alternatives to it. And the video was a full -- it was a full ten minutes long but the dialogue in the video lasted

about 15 to 20 seconds before it was replaced literally by a screaming mob. I mean this was a mob, they were twerking they were F-bombing, they were spitting on and physically abusing the students. It was no longer a discussion of one view versus another, I mean, in the eyes of the mob, this was a good versus evil situation and clearly the pro-life students were on the side that represented evil. So I looked at that video and I wondered how is it in a place supposedly dedicated to an exchange of ideas, how could we have possibly come to this?

I have a good friend and fellow board member at the pregnancy center who is training, she's training to be a Doula. Now a Doula is a person who is trained, it's a woman trained in all phases of delivering babies. My friend said that a lot of the training that she has now is centered around social justice concepts that have almost nothing to do with obstetrics. and she said that in one of the classes she was recently a part of, there were women in the class who were weeping. They were weeping about an evil that had just been unleashed, so they thought, by the fact that a number of southern states had passed heartbeat legislation which prohibits abortion once a baby's heartbeat can be detected. I was incredulous. I asked her how is it that women who are trained to deliver babies would be weeping over legislation designed to protect the lives of those babies. She just said this is how far

we've come. I thought of the prophesy fulfilled in the book of Matthew when Herod, seeking to destroy the baby Jesus, kills all of the children, the male children in Bethlehem. And *Matthew 2:16* says this, it says: *Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted, because they are no more."* I just thought of our 21st century version, it's Doulas weeping at any attempt at curtailing exactly what it was that Herod was doing. And again it begs the question, how did we get here?

I think of another prophetic voice now decades old of Mother Teresa addressing President Clinton and Vice President Al Gore in what is still in my mind the absolute definition of what it really means to be speaking truth to power. Just picture this tiny, little impoverished elderly woman addressing the most powerful people in the entire world, and she blisters the president and our culture of abortion. I want to read you an account of what took place that morning. This is an account by the columnist Peggy Noonan. She was there. And her column gives us a tiny window as to why we are where we are today. This is what she had to say, she says:

I was applauding at my table, and most of my table mates were standing, and I turned to look at what the friendly and intelligent

woman to my right was doing. We had had a nice conversation before the speaking began. She was a lawyer, the wife of a member of the Clinton administration, a modern and attractive blond-haired woman in her late forties or early fifties. She was not applauding. She was staring straight ahead, impassively, if you can call white lips and a stricken expression impassive. Now, Mother Teresa is not perhaps schooled in the ways of world capitals and perhaps did not know that having said her piece and won the moment she was supposed to go back to the airier, less dramatic assertions on which we all agree. Instead she said this: "[Abortion] is really a war against the child, and I hate the killing of the innocent child, murder by the mother herself. And if we accept that the mother can kill even her own child, how can we tell other people not to kill one another? How do we persuade a woman not to have an abortion? As always, we must persuade her with love. The father of that child, however, must also give until it hurts. By abortion, the mother does not learn to live, but kills even her own child to solve her problem. And by abortion, the father is taught that he does not have to take any responsibility at all for the child he has brought into that world. So that father is likely to put other women into the same trouble. So abortion just leads to more abortion. Any country that accepts abortion is not teaching its people to love one another but to use any violence to get what they want. This is why the greatest destroyer of love and peace is abortion."

Well, Noonan continues, she says this: Again applause, and I looked once more to the woman on my right. As the applause spread she sat back in her chair and folded her hands on her lap. Then she briskly reached for her purse and took out a notepad. She took out a slim gold pen. It gleamed in the ballroom lights. She started writing down words. I couldn't resist, I peered as un-obviously as I could to see what she was writing. "Shop Rite," it said on the hospital-white pad. "Cleaners." She was making a To Do list. That was how she detached from the moment. She did not like what she had just heard but she couldn't walk out, couldn't boo, so she made a little list of things to do. I looked towards the dais. Hillary Clinton was still staring straight ahead, unmoving. I imagined her looking at my tablemate and yelling over, "Don't forget the Tide."

I tried to imagine what would happen if Mother Teresa ever gave that speech on a college campus today. I mean in 25 years, we've gone from writing grocery lists to push away the discomfort of truth to screaming, spitting, twerking and cursing those who still are trying to speak that truth. This is how far we've come. And this is how. You see, our souls have gotten stolen incrementally, one little piece at a time. On the one hand I have to admire the cleverness of the enemy. I have to really admire his patience. I mean the enemy of our souls has all the time in the world and so he

goes about his business using a tactic designed to destroy us without our even knowing it. Incrementally we have become heartless and soulless.

This Life Chain morning I want to revisit our explanation about why we as a church are pro-life. And again I want to address the folks who say, well, that's politics, that's not the gospel. First I want to say sometimes the gospel overshadows and intersects with even politics. See, our presidential election marked a major split among evangelicals about what it really means to be pro-life. Some said, well, it's important but it's not any more important than the environment or social justice. I believe they could not have been more mistaken. This morning I'd like to explain how this all happened, how the Bible can prevent it, and why being pro-life has everything to do with being a believer in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You see the most basic question that you could ever ask is: Why are we here? Well, that question was asked centuries ago by the authors of the Westminster Catechism. The very first question they asked was: What is the chief end of man? The answer was, according to the catechism and according to scripture: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Okay. That begs the question: How do we do that? How do we glorify God?

Well, God's glory is his character and his attributes made manifest. So glorifying God is really manifesting or displaying in our lives who God is and what God does. See, God created only one creature to expressly demonstrate his character, and we are that creature. When Jesus commanded us to *let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven*, he's telling us, he says you are God's living billboards. So human beings in God's eyes are very, very big deals. And God tells us why in the very beginning in the book of Genesis. God makes it clear that of all the creatures and all of creation, there's only one creature who has what is called the *imago Dei* and that is the image of God. *Genesis 1:26* says: *Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."* So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them. We don't have a clue, we don't have a clue what a privilege we have been given. You know, God says we are of such an exalted nature, due to the fact that we are made in his image, that at some point he says we are going to be judging the entire world. We are going to be judging angels.

Paul's writing to the Corinthian church they'd gotten caught up in

such earthly pursuits as suing one another, and he says this about our destiny in this letter that he wrote to them, he says this: *If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!* Those four words that are uttered by Paul: *"We will judge angels."* That may well be the reason behind Satan's rebellion in the fall of mankind.

You have to understand first of all that Satan is not a name, Satan is a title, it really means the accuser but it's a title that describes an angel who was named Lucifer who was the highest created being ever. We can only speculate as to why Satan, Lucifer decided to rebel, but suffice it to say he wanted the position of highest authority amongst all the angels. And perhaps learning that we human beings would be the only creatures created in God's image and that we would one day rule over angels proved too much to Satan and caused his rebellion. We do know that God and his angels went to war with Satan and his angels because scripture tells us so. *Revelation 12* says this: *Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they*

lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down -- that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.

Well, what I'd like us to do for the next few minutes is to picture yourself as the devil. Knowing most of you, I think that's easier for some of you than it is for others. I just want you to picture yourself seething with rage. You've lost the most important battle you've ever undertaken, you've determined that as the highest created being, you, too, are worthy of worship. For that act of ultimate pride and arrogance you were cast out and it's entirely possible you hold us humans responsible for your fate. So you're Satan. What do you do? I mean you've already lost the war, all that's left is a series of battles that can only give you a brief little taste of victory. You can't attack the victor because that's God himself, you can't attack him directly so you go for the next best thing, you go for the creatures who bear the image of God. You take on the form of a serpent and you enter into the very garden of Eden where the first man and woman to bear that image have been created and you tempt them. You tempt them into defiling their image by defying their creator and eating the forbidden fruit. And what do you know, they eat and it causes their perfection to completely collapse. It's your greatest victory by

far. In one fell swoop, God's image is defiled and man's perfection is shattered. I mean we all know the rest is history. What I don't think we realize is how specifically Satan still targets the image of God that we bear and how he goes about attacking it. We have a weapon against that. We have a solution to that. The solution really is the Bible. Let me explain to you why.

One of the most popular and highly misunderstood scriptures in all of the Bible is *Proverbs 29:18* which says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish.* You need to know that that scripture's not speaking about a plan or a goal or a vision for your life or for your future. What it is speaking about is the truth that is contained in scripture which is in itself the vision. God says you go outside of that boundary, outside of that vision, the truth, you will perish. Just as there are two separate kingdoms, the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness, there's two separate visions and two separate groundings: One is in the truth, and the other is grounded in a lie. If you don't capture the vision of truth in scripture, God is saying you will perish. And he says that because the only thing outside the truth is by definition a lie. And Jesus tells us in the Bible that lying is Satan's native tongue. Jesus in scripture gives us a real insight as to how Satan operates in the description he gives of him in *John 8:44*. He says: *"He was a*

murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." See, according to Jesus, Satan is the polar opposite of what truth is. He says everything about him and his kingdom is a lie, and that lie gets promulgated as truth to any and all who are not protected by God's truth. Satan and his native tongue, the lie, is the vision that most of this world thinks of as truth. I mean we live on this earth under the rule of the king of liars, the very same angel who was thrown out of heaven and cast down to earth. And the Bible tells us that Satan was the ruler of this planet, the ruler of planet earth. I mean Jesus himself just before going to the cross refers to Satan in *John 12:31*, saying: *"Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out."* Well for most of the world he's still in charge, and he's still in charge because he operates unseen. Folks don't know that he's still in charge, but *2 Corinthians 4* says: *The god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.* So what God is really trying to tell us is that we are no match for his lies and that we need to cling to God's vision as opposed to his. And this is what that entire verse in Proverbs is trying to tell us. This is what he says, it says: *Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is*

he. Well, the law is the word of God. It is the only truth that can expose the attacks that the ruler of this world has on the image of God that we bear.

So this morning I want to revisit three different ways that the ruler of this earth attacks the image of God and how the vision of God's truth responds to those specific attacks. Three ways that Satan attacks God's image is through their design, their diversity and their development. We've spoken about this before, but I get to update it all the time because it changes, it evolves, it moves. And the first area of attack is in the area of design. The battlefield today is this thing called gender. It's the battle between two different versions of truth. We either have gender fluidity on the one side or binary complementarianism on the other side. And I know that's a fifty-cent word, I get it, I get it, but there's a reason for it. It refers -- binary complementarity, binary refers to the way that God has organized this entire world. Binary means two, two sides, two parts, two halves of a whole. And God says all of biology is divided in two. God made them male and female which is a unique and complementary design. Again, let me just go back to what I've already read in Genesis. It says: *Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every*

creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female -- that's two -- He created them.

One of the most basic elements of God's design for us as his image bearer is the complementarity of maleness and femaleness. It should be obvious that each is incomplete without the other. But God made that clear in the words that we speak in marriage ceremonies from *Ephesians 5*, he says: *"FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH."* Those words were originally spoken by God in the garden and they were spoken about the first male and the first female, Adam and Eve. So again we're going back to this thing, okay, imagine yourself as Satan. I'm Satan. Okay. I want to attack the image of God in its most basic level. So I want to attack it at the design level. I'm going to use my primary weapon and my primary weapon is a lie. So I would attack the notion that maleness and femaleness and the beauty of the way they go together on every level, physically, mentally and spiritually, that's an idea that now spawns patriarchy and misogyny and oppression. And since I traffic in lies, I would describe gender differences as fluid and changing, as merely an artificial mental construct, one that needs to be overthrown by the power of Hollywood's persuasion along with music and reality TV. Then I'd add to it the supreme

court's re-interpretation of the law, in what was once obviously a lie will now become a truth swallowed by millions. I mean folks now reject the truth of binary complementarity for the lie of gender fluidity because *where there is no vision, the people perish*. If I were Satan I would be delighted, I mean, I would measure my success by noting instead of male and female, there are now supposedly anywhere from 70 to a hundred different genders. I would be thrilled over the fact that in New York City you can be fined up to \$125,000 for not using the proper non binary pronoun. I'm winning. I'd relish the fact that gender is no longer biological and fixed, it's now attitudinal, it's now fluid. But God says in *Psalm 2: Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us."* He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. See, because we no longer have the vision of truth, we actually believe, we believe that we have successfully burst the bonds of biology apart. But the truth shouts and it shouts otherwise and it's inescapable. I mean, you see, each of us has hundreds of billions of copies of who we are in our DNA. And every single cell tells us whether we're X-Y male or X-X female. And now that biological truth is considered a lie. And the inventions of man with regard to gender are the new truth and to say otherwise

makes you a bigot because *where there is no vision, the people perish*. God tells us that when we reject God's vision of truth, we actually wind up standing truth on its head. *Isaiah 5:20* says: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!* That's an incredibly accurate description of where our culture is today. Satan has successfully attacked the image of God we bear by attacking its design. But God still has his ultimate weapon and will always be the cross. *Romans 5:8* says: *But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Now next, if I was Satan -- again, we're practicing being Satan here -- if I was Satan, having attacked God's design, I would then attack its diversity. And at its core, that is precisely what racism is, it's an attack on the image of God. If I was Satan, I would see racism as one of my greatest assets. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight. But I'd use race and nationality as key elements to divide and separate us into competing groups who fear and mistrust each other. Boy, if I was Satan, I'd be pretty proud of my efforts. I believe this is one of the greatest countries in the world but even great countries are made up of sinful people and every single person who has come to this country came because they knew this was the place where by the

grace of God freedom still found its greatest expression. But only one group of people, and that is African Americans, were brought here chained and sold like animals. That was one of Satan's greatest victories, and its effects on both sides have continued for centuries. And there are folks in our church who still have to instruct their children how to dress and act if they ever get pulled over because they fear for their lives. And I clearly know cops who put their lives on the line every day and wonder if their sacrifice is worth the risk. And I know exactly who delights in pitting this group against that group. It's true, we're centuries from slavery and we've made tremendous progress but understand there's a reason why racism after hundreds of years is still a big problem in this country. And that's because it's an assault on the imago Dei, the image of God. The enemy attacks the image of God and that's because it doesn't look or act exactly like we do and he delights when the bearers of God's own image turn on each other based on nothing more than physical, cultural or ethnic differences, because *where there is no vision, the people perish*. And all you have to do is look at God's word and you'd see racism for the lie that it is. *Acts 10: So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him."* And anyone means anyone. *1 Samuel says: For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward*

appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart. Galatians 3:28 says: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

How many ways does God have to say it? Racism is an attack on the imago Dei. And as gender confusion attacks its design, so racism attacks its diversity, and both sides have really been around since the fall of Adam. And until we see racism as a demonic attack, we will not give it the attention it deserves. Again, if I were Satan I'd be pretty happy with how well my attacks on the design and diversity of God's image have gone, but I would still fear God's weapon of choice, the cross, because *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

Well, we've looked at two of the three ways that Satan attacks the image of God in us. We've looked at his attacks through gender fluidity on our design, we've examined how successfully he has used racism to attack our diversity, and now I want to examine Satan's attack on the image of God in its development. I want to talk, first of all, about bumper stickers. I like to read them on cars. And perhaps because I always make snap judgments about the occupants of those cars based on the bumper stickers, I tend to avoid them on my own car. But I was at a pro-life dinner a ways back and I saw a bumper sticker that I instantly wanted on my car. It was a very short and simple quote. It was from President Ronald

Reagan and the quote said, "I have noticed everyone who is for abortion has been born." That's all it says. You know over the years I've given you many, many different arguments against abortion. This morning I want to give you another pro-life argument based on President Reagan's statement. See, one thing that's inarguable in any discussion between those with the pro-life position and those who are pro-choice is that both of the participants in the argument have already been and are clearly alive. I mean I think almost right off the bat I need say nothing further than to point out the obvious fact that should end the argument before it starts. I want to argue is if you're making the argument whatsoever, you're alive and you're breathing. That means that you have passed whatever fiscal, sociological or philosophical gauntlet there was during your mother's gestation of you and you made it alive to that nine-month finish line. And it's just striking to me that having made it safely in your own personal lifeboat to that destination known as birth, aren't you then, as a pro-choicer, caught up in the process of pulling up the gangplanks, pulling in the lifesavers and making sure the ladders are up in order to make sure that somebody else in the exact same position you were once in doesn't have the opportunity at life that you clearly and obviously had. I mean you could tell me a thousand different reasons why life is difficult for single moms, for woman who want a career, for women who are struggling with the potential

of a birth defect, but I still have to ask you, if this was your own mother facing whatever it was she was facing, what would have happened if she had listened to the pro-choice argument in your case? I guarantee it, you wouldn't be here making the case. So how can you argue to remove the chance of another human being to have what you already have without the very argument seeming like the height of selfishness. I've got my life, now it's incumbent on me to make sure you don't get yours. We're not talking about money, we're not talking about property, we're not talking about opportunity, we are talking about the right to exist. It seems to me to be pro-choice is to deny for others what I've already received for myself, and it's simply the right to be born. It's a right that obviously trumps every other right. I mean I find it stunning that many on the evangelical left seem so concerned about social justice and not nearly as concerned about abortion when the ultimate social injustice is taking someone's life. I mean, concerns about education and opportunity and racism and health, they don't mean a thing to somebody who's already dead. So I have a hard time hearing arguments that put those issues over the issue of life itself. And once again we see the ruler of this world doing what he does best. Let me give you his description from Jesus himself: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the*

father of lies.

So again if I was Satan, hey, I'd use the lie when it comes to attacking the image of God in its design and diversity, and I'd do my best to make sure that people perish due to their lack of vision. But when it came to abortion, I would combine the lie with my other defining characteristic, again as Jesus put it, *he was a murderer from the beginning*, I would kill God's image bearers while they're still in their mother's womb and then I would overwhelm the woman I caught in that trap with guilt. I'd then seek to cut them off from the only resource that could restore them to life by grace by giving them my vision instead of God's. I'd keep them from the one weapon that I would fear the most and that is the cross, because *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us*. If I could just keep people from getting that vision, from understanding the truth that God holds out absolute forgiveness to any and all who would seek it through repentance, if I could blind people to the grace that is offered to them through the cross, I could kill God's image and destroy with guilt the women that I victimized, because *where there is no vision, the people perish*. Gender confusion and racism are awful sins but the victims of those sins still have a chance to escape. Not so with abortion.

Proverbs 24:11 says: *Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.* It's the next part of that verse that shows us why the Life Chain taking place today really matters. This is the next part of that same verse, it says in *verse 12*: *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work?* Some folks ask what is the point of standing up with a poster for an hour and a half? Do you really think you're going to change somebody's mind? I rather doubt that anybody's mind is going to be changed by something like that. That's not the reason for doing it. The reason for doing it, I believe, are not necessarily to change somebody's mind, it's actually there's three different reasons. Number one is to bear public witness; number two is encourage one another; and number three is to encourage myself. I, me, myself, I need to have a public declaration. In some ways this is almost like a baptism. It's publicly declaring I'm on the pro-life side and not at all on the pro-choice side. And taking a public stand by holding a sign clearly puts me on one side and not the other. And here's why I think it really matters. And this goes back, I've said this before, this goes back to what Eisenhower did after World War II. He did something extraordinary to the German citizens who lived in and around the concentration camps where millions of Jews were

executed. What he did was he took his soldiers and he went into the towns and he forcibly marched the citizens -- not the soldiers, but the average ordinary citizens, he marched them into the camps to force them to see what they had studiously avoided seeing. See, Eisenhower understood that these peoples' ignorance was an ignorance of choice, one that they were solely responsible for and one that they had cultivated in order to make -- avoid having to make any type of difficult moral choice. Their lack of choice was a choice, and Eisenhower was determined to hold them responsible for it. And it's the exact type of ignorance that allows the vast majority of pro-choice folks who think that only the issue in abortion is really the freedom to choose. One of the most appropriate questions you could ask someone who's pro-choice is this: Can you describe for me exactly what takes place during an abortion? And if the person says, "No," don't you then have the right to say, "Well, how can you support something that you know absolutely nothing about?" You see, the vast majority of folks who don't know what an abortion is really about don't know because they don't want to know. They're terribly busy writing "to do" lists to Shop Rite. And once again the word of God exposes the lie. *Proverbs 24:12* says: *If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work? "Behold, we did not know this." God says*

your ignorance is by design. I mean how else can you explain the livid reaction that people have that explicit photographic evidence of what abortion does. I don't know if you've ever seen that, people display those pictures and folks get outraged. But they're not outraged about the procedure itself, they're outraged about the tastelessness of the photos. Again, I mentioned this fact, I recently watched a Ken Burns documentary on the Vietnam War and it was filled with these horrible pictures of broken, dead bodies, but nobody complained about the tastelessness of that presentation because no one still clings to a moral ambivalence and a contrived ignorance when it comes to that war. When it comes to the war on the unborn, it's a completely different story. You see, folks demand, they demand the right to stay ignorant. I submit to you that anyone who actually witnessed what takes place during an abortion and that is the forcible dismemberment of a live human being while he or she is still in their mother's womb, if they actually witnessed one, they would be so traumatized by what they saw taking place that they would have an almost instant change of opinion. But that's not the point. The point is to remain ignorant. Bearing public witness is simply an attempt to push back against that ignorance.

A second reason is to encourage each other. And the word "encourage," the word literally means to grow or stimulate courage

in someone else. Our presence is encouragement, an encouragement to one another. Our absence is a discouragement. When the Life Chain first started years ago, there were upwards of 2,000 people in attendance. It's now down to a handful, and that is a great discouragement. And finally, the third point is to encourage myself. I know for many of you this has been an annual event, you've attended for years, some of you even for decades. You've publicly stood against the ruler of this world and because we have the vision of God's word, we know this about him: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* And we've watched, we've watched as those lies and murders have hardened the heart, seared the conscience and wounded the spirit of an entire nation. We've seen how incrementalism works and in one tiny way through this Life Chain, we have publicly declared whose side we are on while also displaying God's ultimate weapon, because *God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* I don't know that I've ever heard of a single heart or mind being changed by this event, but I also know that that knowledge is way beyond my scope. I do know this, I know that God changed my heart and my mind by the power of his Holy Spirit and that God showed his love for me while I was still a sinner. That gives me all the hope and the encouragement that I need. And

what God asks of us is not that we do what only He can do but that we speak the truth in love. And so today, in a very small way, we have that opportunity. Let's pray.

Father, I just want to, again, pray for our nation. Lord, I pray every single day, I pray for our corporate wickedness like Daniel prayed, including himself, we are part of this country, we are part of the corporate wickedness that every day goes up to your throne and every day dares you to do something about it, and my prayer always contains a plea that the cup of your wrath is still being filled and is not filled because once it is filled, the end is going to be upon us, and judgment will arrive. And so my prayer, Lord, is that instead of the wrath that is so highly deserved in our culture coming from heaven, that we would again see the power of your Holy Spirit poured out in revival. Lord, I pray that you would send your Spirit to us. I don't know how much worse we can be, but I also know that at times when revival has come, it's also when people have said it can't get worse. And so my prayer is not that the cup of your wrath is full but that you would be sending us your Holy Spirit so that we would have the vision and not perish. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.