

The Salvation of Babies Who Die, Part 1

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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Some of you who tuned in to the Larry King Show a week ago Saturday will remember that Larry fired a question to me on the air that came out of nowhere. The question that reveals a nagging, troubling issue in the human heart. He asked me, "What about a two-year-old baby crushed at the bottom of the World Trade Center?"

I answered, "Instant heaven."

He replied with another question. "Wasn't a sinner?"

I again answered, "Instant heaven."

That's a compelling question, what about a baby crushed at the bottom of the Trade Center? What about any baby that dies? It's an agonizing question. It's a question that plagues Christians and non-Christians alike...what happens to babies that die?

All kinds of strange answers have been offered in the past. We don't need to deal with those, we need to know the right answer. I said, "Instant heaven." Now what was my authority for saying that? In a sound bite environment like that I didn't have time for an explanation and he didn't ask for one. But you deserve one so I'm going to tell you why I said what I said.

We're often hearing these days from those who are against war of any kind the statement, "Many innocent children will die and what about them?" This matter of death that exists in the world is obviously a massive force that operates in the realm of the little ones. We need to understand what it indicates, what it means. Life begins at conception, that is clear in Scripture. This is what the Bible teaches without question. So any death from the point of conception on is the death of a person and persons have eternal souls. Millions, perhaps billions of such souls have died throughout history. Millions continue to die today.

In fact, cumulatively in the modern era billions. One report I read in a book called Empty Arms says that up to 25 percent of all human conceptions do not complete the twentieth week of pregnancy...one out of four conceived die. Seventy-five percent of fatal deaths occur in the first twelve weeks. Neo-natal death, that is death in the womb, para-natal death, that is death at the time of birth occur in massive numbers even today with medical advancement. We have a larger population in the world than we've ever had, we have a lower mortality rate than we've ever had because of medical advancement, we still have a massive amounts of death. The latest statistics from the year 1999 indicate four million, three hundred and fifty thousand babies died in that year, infant mortality. Study concludes four million, three hundred and fifty thousand babies died is based upon statistical information and estimates are that the figures are so low that the actuality maybe more than that figure by double since most losses during pregnancy may not even be reported. The highest rates of infant mortality are found in the poorest and most primitive nations and at the same

time the most pagan nations, mostly in Africa and Asia.

Take four million, three hundred and fifty thousand in the year 1999 and just keep adding the years and you can see the numbers of deaths are massive, staggering. These are, as I said, eternal souls and the question about "where are they?" then is of monumental significance. They're either populating hell at an incredible rate, or populating heaven at an equally incredible rate, or getting divided into heaven and hell. This is a question that needs to be answered, needs to be answered on the large scale, needs to be answered on the individual scale. A parent has the right to know...where is my baby? Where is my child? Where is that adult child of mine whose mind never developed and who for all intents and purposes mentally is still an infant? The death of one single baby in a family, the loss of one in a womb, the loss of a child at birth is significant.

There was a study some years ago that I read called "Mental Reactions to Para-natal Death," and it chronicled the parental reaction to the loss of a baby around the time of birth. Sixty percent of the parents surveyed were angry. Fifty percent of the men felt guilt. Ninety percent of the women felt guilt about the death of that child. Seventy-five percent were irritable. Sixty-five to seventy-five percent of the parents lost their appetite. Eighty to ninety percent lost their sleep and ninety-five to a hundred percent of them felt a profound and deep sadness.

It's important to understand that there are some amazing impacts of this on the life of parents. So when you look at it in the broad scale, millions upon millions of these little ones dying, or you look at the individual level and you see the sorrow and sadness that it brings into the life of a family, either perspective cries out for an answer. The agonizing mother in Afghanistan where a hundred and fifty babies out of a thousand die and at least that's the figures that are reported and it's likely double that, or the poor hungry mother in Angola where it is reported that two hundred out of a thousand die and it's likely double that, to you here in our congregation who lost a little one along the way, there needs to be an answer, there needs to be an answer from God, there needs to be an answer from God's Word to this troubling reality of infant death. You start adding up the years, you start adding up the millions, you start adding up the billions...the question, "Where are they?" becomes a very compelling question.

And you can add to that the very, I suppose, somewhat strange biblical indication that God Himself acknowledges, even authorizes the death of some infants. For example, in Isaiah 13:16 when God called for judgment on Babylon, He said, "Their little ones will also be dashed to pieces before their eyes." When God called for Assyria to make a war of judgment on Israel He said in Hosea 13:16, "Their little ones will be dashed to pieces," same statement. The same was said of Assyria's war on Egypt in Nahum chapter 3 and verse 10. Amazingly Psalm 137:8 and 9 says, "O daughter of Babylon, you devastated one, how blest will be the one who repays you with the recompense with which you have repaid us, how blest will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rocks." Blest will be a nation who punishes Babylon, even including the death of little ones.

What happens to these little ones? The death of which God authorizes, in a sense, in fulfilling His judgment purposes? I suppose it would also be fair to say that when a birth is successful this is because God has allowed that to happen. We can say what David said in Psalm 22 verse 9, "Yet

Thou art He who didst bring me forth from the womb. Thou didst make me trust when upon my mother's breast upon Thee I was cast from birth. Thou hast been my God from my mother's womb." David acknowledged that life came from God and when that life survived the womb and the birth and actually began to live, it was a life that God had allowed to live. No death occurs apart from the purpose of God, no life occurs apart from the purpose of God.

Now remember in the original creation there was no death. And man, according to Genesis 1:26 to 28, was given the power to procreate, that is to produce life in a deathless world. That was God's original intent that Adam and Eve would be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and they would literally produce life in a deathless world so that no...no life conceived would ever die. However, when Adam and Eve sinned, death came on all and death comes to all and it comes to many in infancy and childhood.

I suppose it would be an educated guess to say that perhaps half of the people ever conceived die before they reach any level of maturity. And again I ask the question...how does God deal with them? Is the answer comforting? Is the answer encouraging? is the answer hopeful? Or is it discouraging? Do they go instantly to heaven?

Why did I say that? I'm not the first one to try to deal with this, but there are a lot of people who aren't dealing with it today. I was on a panel at a conference, a large conference, with three other pastors and it was a question and answer panel and I was sitting up there with these other very fine pastors whom I love and respect. And one of the questions came from the audience was, "What happens to babies that die?" And they went down the first three and the answer in each case was, "I don't know," which isn't very comforting. And it puts me in a terrible spot because when it came to me I said, "They go to heaven...they go to heaven." And I tried to give a brief explanation of why I believe that's true. But I thought as I've looked back on that so many times...how can you be a pastor and not get an answer to that question? Because you're dealing with people constantly who go through this. Even C.S. Lewis agreed with me. Now he didn't know it... C.S. Lewis in his wonderful book *The Last Battle* wrote about a terrible train accident, one of those terrible disasters that killed all the children in a family. And that surfaced the question...What about those children?...as any disaster does.

This is what he wrote. "And as God spoke, he no longer looked to them like a lion." You remember, he pictures God as a lion, Aslan. He said, "As God spoke he no longer looked at Him as a lion, but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them, and for us this is the end of all stories and we can say most truly that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world had only been the cover of the title page, now at last they were beginning chapter one of the great story which goes on forever in which every chapter is better than the one before," end quote. That's the inimitable C.S. Lewis saying they were ushered into the real story.

Now that's prose, I know, but it's true, isn't it? It's right, isn't it?, to tell parents when children die they do live happily ever after. I think the Word of God will affirm the salvation of little ones who die.

A place to begin, Psalm 139...Psalm 139. What I'm going to do tonight is just give you a little bit of a look at Psalm 139, then I want to talk a little theology with you and I'm going to be precise as I can

because this demands precision. And then next Sunday night I'm going to support the theology with the text of various Scriptures. So this will be a two-part look at this issue.

Psalms 39...139 does provide for us a good starting place. I want you to look at verse 17. This is a place to launch our look and then we're going to go backwards in this first part of Psalm 139. "How precious also are Thy thoughts to me, O God; how vast is the sum of them." The psalmist, David, has captured some precious thoughts here, precious divine truths that mean so much to him, that's why he calls them precious. They are treasured truths. They are gems to hold on to. And what are they? Let's go back and find out.

First precious truth that the psalmist grips is that God knows everything about him, even before he could talk. Look at verse 1, "O Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me, Thou doest know when I sit down, when I rise up. Thou doest understand my thought from afar. Thou doest scrutinize my path and my lying down and are acquainted intimately with all my ways." You know everything about me, everything about me. You know me. You know when I sit down, when I rise up. In other words, you know every detail of every moment of every day. You know what I think. You know my path. You know my sleeping. You know everything intimately about all my ways and You have known it even before there is a word in my tongue. Before I could ever speak You knew everything about me. I was known to you in every element of my life. "Behold, O Lord, You know it all." God knows everything about me, even before I can talk.

The second precious truth is that God is actively involved in my life. Verse 5, "You have enclosed me behind and before. You've laid Your hand on me." In other words, You've got me backed up on both sides and covered on top. You're active in my life. I'm in the middle and You've got me surrounded. Verse 6, he says, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it's too high, I can't attain it." You know everything about me before I can speak. You have my life completely in Your hands. You have pressured me from both sides. You've kept me contained and I can't get out the top because You're there. It's a precious truth, isn't it? From the very start You're actively involved in controlling my life. A third precious thought is that God will never lose sight of or knowledge of me. There is no way I can ever be lost to You. "Where can I go from Your Spirit?" Verse 7, "Where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend to heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold You're there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea then there Thy hand will lead me, Thy right hand will lay hold of me." I can't go anywhere outside of Your knowledge. I can't go anywhere outside of Your vision. I will never be lost to You.

The fourth precious truth is that God will never be limited in that knowledge no matter how dark it gets. This is sort of metaphoric language, in a sense, it's never going to be so dark. You say, "Well I can see you in the light, but things might get so dark that God loses His view." No, he says in verse 11 and 12, "Surely the darkness will overwhelm me, I might say, and the light around me will be night." In other words, I'm going to fall into some circumstance, I'm going to fall into some problem, some dilemma, some condition and it's going to be so dark the Lord isn't going to be able to find me. And then verse 12 he says, "Even the darkness is not dark to Thee, the night is as bright as the day, darkness and light are alike to Thee."

Now the point of this is these are credibly precious thoughts of the psalmist and what they tell us is that God knows every single detail about his life from beginning to end, starting before he could ever say a word. How is it that God has this personal intimate knowledge? Answer...because God is...and here's the fifth precious thought...God is his personal creator. Verse 13, "For Thou didst form my inward parts. Thou didst weave me in my mother's womb." You put together the male chromosomes and the female chromosomes, You wove my DNA. You made me personally.

The sixth precious thought is in verse 16. You determined my destiny. You planned my life. "Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance." You saw me in Your sovereign view before I was ever formed. ""And in Your book everything about me was written down, the days that were ordained for me when as yet there wasn't one of them."

Now these are precious thoughts. God knows everything about me even before I can talk. God is in complete control of my life. God will never lose sight of me no matter what goes on. I can never be lost to God. There is no circumstance that can in any way limit His knowledge. The reason He knows me so well is He is my personal creator who has planned carefully my destiny. Those are precious thoughts.

It's not as if lives are being conceived willy-nilly and God's not involved. This is not just true of David. David is speaking for every man. He is speaking of intimate association between God and each human creation. God is intimately involved in every little life...every life. It's not just a chain of procreative acts that He inaugurated, He is there in every single conception. These are precious thoughts because this indicates to us how precious every life is. If every life is so precious that God knows it all, plans it all, guards and protects it all, never loses sight of anything then they must matter to Him. They must matter to Him.

And we could conclude from that alone that since God is by nature a Savior and since God is not willing that any should perish but all should come to repentance, and since God would have all men to be saved, there's every reason to believe just from that alone that a caring God who created that life to begin with, who superintends and guards that life, who knows intimately everything about that life, should that life perish physically in its infancy there would be every reason from that Psalm alone to trust the grace of God who is by nature a Savior in behalf of that life.

Let me show you a couple of other passages, and we're just starting to build a foundation here. In Job chapter 3 and verse 16 and 17, again I don't like the NAS translation as well as I like the New King James. Those of you who have the New King James version have a leg up on the translation. I'm going to read the New King James, it's a better representation, I think, here.

Job is in some serious despair. How do we know that? Verse 1 of Job 3. "Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth." Pretty serious despair. Job said, "Let the day perish in which I was to be born and the night which said, 'A boy is conceived.' May that day be darkness." I wish I had never been born this suffering is so profound...never been born.

In verses 16 and 17 this is what he says, "Why was I not hidden like a still-born child, like infants who never saw light? Why didn't I die in my mother's womb? There the wicked cease from troubling. There the weary are at rest."

What's he saying? He's saying I'd be better off if I had miscarried. I would be better off if I were still-born so I wouldn't have to face troubling life but I would enter immediately into...what?...rest...rest. Job understood that dying as an infant would bring one to rest and one would escape the pain of suffering. He certainly didn't believe that infants that die go to hell and some eternal torment, but rather had the confidence that they entered into rest.

In Ecclesiastes also in chapter 6, you don't have to turn to it you can just jot it down, Ecclesiastes 6:3 to 5. Solomon laments, he laments that a still-born child is better off than a person who lives a thousand years twice and doesn't enjoy the right things. He says, "What's the point of living two thousand years if you don't ever enjoy true goodness, you'd be better off a still-born child."

In both of these cases you have by implication the idea that being still-born takes you to a place of rest. Being still born is preferable to a life of wickedness, a life of unfulfillment. Now those are some implicit references. Next week we're going to look at some explicit references that I think support the fact not just implicitly but explicitly that children who die go to heaven. So if we answer yes, what about babies that die, if we say instant salvation, yes, how are we going to understand that in the light of sin? In the light of fallenness?

So, I'm going to ask and answer a few questions. I'm going to give you a little theology lesson here. First question, who qualifies as an infant or a child? Fair enough? People always say, "Well, what's the age of accountability?" That's the way the question is typically answered. I'd like to pose it another way, who qualifies as an infant or a child? Who are we talking about here? We heard testimonies tonight in the waters of baptism from some young people who were 13, is that the age? Is it 12? Is it 11? Is it 10? I heard from one young lady that she believes that her salvation occurred at the age of 7, another, I think, at the age of 10. What is that age? And you often hear that question asked. That's really not the question because we're not talking about an age of accountability. Get this in your mind, we're talking about a condition of accountability. Get the word "age" out of this discussion. We're talking about a condition of accountability...not an age. Who qualifies then in our discussion as an infant or child who dying is saved, who dying instantly goes to heaven? Who are we talking about?

Answer...those who have not reached sufficient mature understanding in order to comprehend convincingly the issues of law and grace, sin and salvation. I'll say it again cause I thought about it a long time and this is the way I want you to hear it. We're talking about someone who has not reached sufficient mature understanding to comprehend convincingly the issues of law and grace and sin and salvation. This is certainly an infant in the womb. This is certainly an infant at birth. This is certainly a small child. And this is certainly a mentally impaired adult at any age. Anyone in the condition who cannot sufficiently understand and comprehend so as to be fully convinced of the issues of law and grace and sin and salvation. It's not an age, it is a condition. And from child to child it varies. And as I said, you have to include in this those who grow up mentally disadvantaged, mentally disabled, mentally retarded so as never to be able to have a sufficient mature understanding and a convincingly comprehensive grasp of law and grace and sin and salvation. This is not an age, this is a condition. That's who we're talking about, people in that condition where they cannot in a mature way

understand and comprehend convincingly these issues. We're talking about those people. Are they saved if they die?

And the next question that we have to address in framing up this discussion and I'm being careful in detail because I want this to be helpful to not only to us but to many people who are asking this question, so I want to be careful to cover everything. A second question...are all children conceived as sinners? Are all children conceived as sinners?

Now there is a belief, still around though it was condemned 1600 years ago, there is a belief that teaches that all people are born without sin. They're all born, we're all born morally clean. Sin only takes root in our lives when we commit our first sin so we come in morally clean, this view says. And we commit sin by choice and then when we commit sin by choice we become sinners and not until. Those who hold this view find it very convenient in dealing with children because they say since these little ones can't make a moral choice to sin, they're therefore not sinners so when they die they go to heaven because they're not sinners. They die in sinlessness. As I said, 1600 years ago this view called Pelagianism was denounced as a heresy by every church that met after the death of Pelagius, and yet it's survived till today in some forms of what we call Arminian theology. However, the Bible is absolutely crystal clear that all children are sinners from conception...all children. The principle of iniquity is imbedded in the human race. Children are born morally corrupt. They are born with an irresistible bent toward evil. And any notion that children are born morally neutral and free from a predisposition to sin is absolutely contrary to Scripture. And as I said, this view was denounced as heresy after the death of the one who propounded it and has been considered heresy by those faithful to biblical theology ever since.

All humans are born in sin. If infants were not sinful, if they were not morally corrupt, then they wouldn't die. If they were born innocent or pure or morally neutral there would be no basis for their death. The very fact that they die indicates that the disease of sin is there in them because sin is the killer. It is in their inherited sin nature that the seeds of death are planted.

And furthermore, do you know any adult that chose not to sin and therefore perpetuated some holy perfection? Do you know any adult that didn't repeat Adam and Eve's conscious rebellion against God? Do you know any adult that didn't actually sin? No, the only persons who don't actually sin are those who die in infancy and the only reason they don't actually sin is because they die before they can manifest their sinfulness. They die before they can make a responsible moral choice to rebel against God which all of them will do if they live. Any child who lives to the point of moral responsibility, any person who gets beyond that condition where they can't understand and they can't convincingly grasp the truths of salvation, any child who lives past the point of responsible moral to the point of responsible moral choice will choose to sin. We all do. The Bible is absolutely clear that all infants who survive end up wretched sinners because it's in their nature. First Kings 8:46, "There is no man who doesn't sin." Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, in sin my mother conceived me." It doesn't mean he was an illegitimate child, that's not the case. But from the very conception sin was there imbedded in his nature.

Psalm 58:3, "The wicked are estranged from the womb. And those who speak lies go astray from birth." Psalm 143:2, "In Thy sight no one living is righteous," that is from conception on, in the womb, at birth, in infancy, in childhood or adulthood, no one is righteous. Proverbs 20 and verse 9, "Who can say I have cleansed my heart, I'm pure from sin?" No one. Ecclesiastes 7 and verse 20, "Indeed there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins." Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and who can know it?" Everything in Scripture cries out about the sinfulness of man.

Jesus in Matthew 15:18 says, "The things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and out of the heart come evil thoughts and murders and adulteries and fornications and thefts and false witness and slanders. These are the things that defile a man." It's what comes from the inside. In Romans chapter 3, "There is none righteous, no not one." Romans 3 goes on to describe the wretchedness of the human heart.

So, the Bible tells us that sinfulness is not a condition that comes upon people when they're old enough to choose to do evil. It is the condition of the entire human race and every conception brings into being a sinful life. Ever since Adam and Eve everyone born has been born in a fallenness sinful state. That becomes evident as soon as any behavioral choice is made. We're born sinners, we are also born guilty because we inherit the guilt of Adam's sin.

I don't want to go into detail, if you want detail you can get the teaching that we've done on Romans chapter 5. But a couple of verses. Romans 5:12, "Just as through one man's sin entered into the world and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned." That is a profoundly definitive statement that says when Adam sinned, the whole human race became guilty in Adam and we all sinned there and we all died there. And every human that is born bears the guilt of Adam's sin, the principle of iniquity and death. We are born corrupt, inheriting this defiled human nature and bearing guilt for that original sin. And so in the same chapter, Romans 5:21 it says, "Sin reigned in death from that point on." All people then are born sinners, they are born resisting righteousness and loving evil. We are...this is a very important verse...Ephesians 2:3, by nature the children of wrath. That is our nature.

Genesis 8:21 says, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Isaiah 48:8, "I know that thou wouldst deal very treacherously and was called a transgressor from the womb."

Now this is important. Every child is conceived with a deadly virus, the S-I-N virus with corrupt motives, corrupt attitudes, corrupt desires, corrupt ambitions, corrupt objectives and bears the guilt of Adam's sin. So we cannot answer the question by saying all babies die and go to heaven because they're sinless. They're not. They're not. The very fact that they die proves that they have inherited the corruption of sin that produces death.

Now that leads us to a third question, and we're getting to the issues now. What implications does this truth of depravity have on the issue of dying infants? We must conclude that all babies are depraved sinners from the time of conception because they're born to depraved parents. And like produces like. And here is where some people jump in and say, "Well, if they're all sinners, if they're all born in sin, they're all guilty then they're all damned to hell. And all the little ones who die by the millions and

billions because they are sinful deserve death and hell and that's where they go since they can't repent and since they can't cry out to God for mercy and grace, they can't believe in Jesus Christ, they all go to hell."

There are people who believe this. There are people who have told me that repeatedly. This is...this is sort of an implication drawn out of their doctrine of total depravity that because all who are born are born into total depravity and deserve hell, they get hell. It is supposedly their sequential or logical process moving from the view of total depravity. It was one of the accusations against Spurgeon. Spurgeon was strong on reformed theology and people accused Spurgeon, as they have accused others who believe in reformed theology or Calvinism, as it is called, of damning all the babies. And maybe Spurgeon never responded better than this, he said, quote: "Among the gross falsehoods that have been uttered against the Calvinist proper is the wicked calumny that we hold the damnation of little infants. A baser lie was never uttered. There may have existed somewhere in some corner of the earth a miscreant...a criminal...who would dare to say that there were infants in hell but I have never met with him nor have I met with a man who ever saw such a person. We say with regard to infant, Scripture saith but little and therefore where Scripture is confessedly scant it is for no man to determine dogmatically but I think I speak for the entire body, or certainly with exceedingly few exceptions and those unknown to me when I say we hold that all infants who die are elect of God and are therefore saved. And we look to this as being the means by which Christ shall see of the travail of his soul to a great degree and we do sometimes hope that thus the multitude of the saved shall be made to exceed the multitude of the lost. Whatever views our friends may hold upon the point, they are not necessarily connected with Calvinistic doctrine. I believe that the Lord Jesus who said of such is the Kingdom of Heaven doth daily and constantly receive into His loving arms those tender ones who are only shown and then snatched away to heaven," end quote.

If you survey Reformed Calvinistic literature over 450 years since Calvin, you will find that the vast majority of all the writers believed that all infants who die are taken to heaven. Now let me kind of expand on that. This is very, very important.

You see, it's only pure true reformed soteriology, salvation, only pure true reformed soteriology can account for the fact that fallen, sinful, guilty, depraved children who die with no spiritual merit, die with no religious merit, die with no moral merit of their own can be welcomed by a holy God into eternal glory...only pure reformed theology can allow for that because only the purest theology believes that salvation is all by grace. How were you saved? By what? Grace.

You say, "Well, if God just takes all the babies to heaven, that's just grace." Right. But how were you saved? By law? What do you want? Law for babies and grace for you? You had no more to do with your salvation than a helpless infant. That's why the truest and purest theology is that theology which understands that salvation is by grace and maybe that's what Jesus had in mind in part when He said, "You who go to heaven go to heaven as little children." Is there a better illustration of salvation by grace than the salvation of a helpless infant? True understanding...any true understanding of Scripture yields the reality that all salvation is by sovereign choice by God through grace based on nothing that the sinner merits. And is there a better illustration of that than saving lost infants? Does

that magnify sovereignty? Does it magnify grace? Of course it does.

Phil Johnson wrote in one of his lessons, "I met one fellow whose own child died in infancy and he seemed to think there was something meritorious about believing his own child had gone to hell. Every chance he got he brought up the issue and boasted about he and his wife had come to grips with the fact that their child was simply not among the elect. I told him he and his wife were in for a pleasant surprise when they get to glory. I recall, he said, that he was absolutely certain that if God elected that infant to salvation, He would have kept him alive long enough to bring him to faith. My reply was that he would have had just as much biblical warrant to conclude that if God had decided not to elect that child, He would have kept him on earth long enough for the child's heart to be hardened by sin and his rebellion against God to be manifest through deliberate actions because whenever Scripture describes the inhabitants of hell, it always does so with lists of sins and abominations they have deliberately committed. We might look at the biblical data and conclude that when God takes the life of a little one, it is actually an act of mercy, keeping that child from being hardened by a life of exposure to evil and a life of deliberate rebellion against God. One's position on this issue says a lot about one's view of God...I like this...and His grace."

And if you understand by nature God is a...what?...Savior...haven't we said that over and over and over and over?...is not that the truest expression of His heart? Isn't Jeremiah weeping the tears of God in Jeremiah 13? Isn't Scripture saying God wants people to be saved, He's not willing that they perish? How can we believe that if He catapults billions of helpless infants into hell? Is this any magnification of grace? Is this any illustration of grace?

Somebody else will come at this point and say, "Ah yes, but God is gracious but only to baptized babies." This is right. This is Lutheranism. Now we certainly have much to thank Martin Luther for, but infant baptism isn't one of the things. Luther's catechism says this, quote: "Baptism worketh forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe as the Word of the promise of God declare." Well the baby can't believe, and that's where Luther jumped in and said, "Well, surrogate faith on the part of his parents is rendered in his behalf. So baptized babies will be saved."

The Lutheran Augsburg Confession says, quote: "Of baptism, Lutherans teach that it is necessary to salvation and that by baptism the grace of God is offered and that children are to be baptized who by baptism being offered to God are received into God's favor," end quote. This view is held by Anglicans and Episcopalians, some Reformed groups.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches essentially the same thing, that the removal of sin depends on the sacrament of infant Baptism. Without infant Baptism, without Baptism no child can be saved. The Council of Trent, 1563, based the salvation of infants on Roman Catholic Baptism. In 1951 Pius XII taught that, quote: "No other way besides Baptism is seen as imparting the life of Christ to little children." The New Catholic Catechism says, "By Christian Baptism one enters into the Kingdom of God and into the sphere of the saving work of Christ."

So the answer of the sacramentalists is the baptized babies are saved and the unbaptized babies aren't. Now this would make salvation not an act of grace but an act of works. That is no credit to the

grace of God. The point must be rejected outright.

First of all, since infant baptism isn't mentioned or taught in Scripture. I remember when I was debating R.C. Sproul on baptism and he's my good friend, but he didn't have a case. So when he asked me if I'd debate him, I said, "In a heartbeat." And so after I gave my side of the thing and he gave his, he started out by saying, "Now MacArthur says infant baptism isn't in the Bible and he's right. However..." and off he went. If you're trying to find infant baptism in the Bible, you're not going to find it. Infant baptism would certainly be a work and if babies are saved in that work, then salvation is not by grace.

Now let me summarize. No view of infant salvation which denies original sin and total depravity is true. Did you get that? No view of infant salvation which denies original sin and total depravity is true. Babies are not free from sin, they are sinners.

Second summary point, no view of universal damnation of infants who die necessarily protects the doctrines of salvation since salvation is grounded in absolute sovereignty and comprehensive grace. All babies saved would be an act of grace apart from any merit on the part of any child and that is true of adult salvation.

And thirdly, no baptism of anyone, including infants, saves them. That would make salvation by works.

What I just said to you, in case you didn't follow it, is that all babies are depraved, fallen, guilty, corrupt sinners. But sending them all to hell doesn't necessarily protect the doctrine of salvation since the glory of the doctrine of salvation is that it is a sovereign choice by God provided for unworthy, incapable sinners purely on the basis of grace. That eliminates any work, including baptism.

One more question. If infants are saved when they die, by what means are they saved? If those who are retarded, mentally retarded, mentally disabled, dysfunctional and therefore in the same category as an infant would be in the condition of not having a capability to understand matters of salvation, if they are saved when they die, by what means are they saved? By what means?

Well, I'll tell you the means. By the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ because that is the only means that anybody can be saved. Now listen to what I say. God has predestined all He wills into salvation, including those in infancy. That salvation is by His sovereign choice through grace alone though all infants deserve eternal judgment because of their guilt and corruption. Their sins were paid for by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross in which He bore the wrath of God not only for all who could believe, but for all who could not believe. I really do believe that only those who understand true reformed theology can grasp the redemption of little ones which fits so beautifully because it's all of sovereignty and it's all of grace.

B.B. Warfield, the great Princeton theologian, wrote this, "The destiny of infants who die is determined irrespective of their choice by an unconditional decree of God, suspended for its execution on no act of their own. And their salvation is wrought by an unconditional application of the grace of Christ to their souls through the immediate and irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit prior to and apart from any action of their own proper wills. And if death in infancy does depend on God's providence, it is assuredly God in His providence who selects this vast multitude to be made participants of His

unconditional salvation. This is but to say that they are unconditionally, predestined to salvation from the foundation of the world. If only a single infant dying in irresponsible infancy be saved, the whole Arminian principle is traversed. If all infants dying such are saved, not only the majority of the saved but doubtless the majority of the human race hitherto have entered into life by a non-Arminian pathway." A little tongue and cheek there.

What he is saying is anybody who has an Arminian system has in that system some contribution to salvation made by the individual, that it's partly God and partly us. And that's why he intends to say that it is only a pure understanding of the doctrine of salvation that says it's all of God and all of grace that can account for the salvation of these little ones. And I quickly add that salvation is not apart from Christ, it is through Christ. He, as Warfield says, is the bearer of their sins in His own body on the cross.

You say, "But...but...but...but...but they didn't believe, they didn't believe." They couldn't believe...they couldn't believe. And so in grace and mercy and sovereign election through the sacrifice of Christ and His resurrection freely applied to them, they are ushered into God's Kingdom. And, of course, Scripture nowhere teaches infant damnation and I'll show you next time how it teaches the opposite. And I want to close with this. What does Scripture teach about damnation? Turn to Revelation chapter 20. This is important. This is the main point that I want you to get in this message tonight. Revelation chapter 20, Scripture teaches, and listen very carefully, Scripture teaches, and here's a summary statement I'm going to show you how it comes through Scripture teaches that men and women are saved by...what?...grace, but damned by works...by works. Scripture teaches that all condemned sinners earn their eternal punishment by their sins.

How do I know that? Because whenever you go to the judgment seat this is what you see, Revelation 20 verses 11 and 12. Here's the Great White Throne, this is the final judgment of all the ungodly of all history and the One sitting upon the throne from whose presence earth and heaven fled away and no place was found for them, obviously the great Judge, God has committed to Christ it tells us in John 5. There is Christ the great Judge on the throne and verse 12, "I saw the dead, the great, the small standing before the throne and books were opened. And another book was opened which was the Book of Life and the dead were judged...listen to this...from the things which were written in the books according to their deeds and the sea gave up the dead which were in it and death and hades gave up the dead which were in them and they were judged every one of them according to their...what?...deeds, or works."

I'm going to say this again. Scripture always, always connects eternal condemnation to the sinner's deeds, works...always. In John 8:21 and 24 the most significant damning work Jesus says, "Because you believe not in Me you will die in your sins and where I go you'll never come." The greatest of all the sinner's evil works is unbelief...unbelief. And unbelief is always singled out as the primary damning sin. John 3:36, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life, he who doesn't obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him." Earlier in the chapter He says, "You don't believe...you don't believe and because you don't believe you're condemned, you're condemned if you don't believe. And when you don't believe you don't obey." So there's a life of evil works that are

recorded, the books record it. God has a complete record of every sin of every sinner who has ever lived and it is on the basis of those records that they will be condemned. It is the sins that sinners commit that constitute the record that is established against them by which condemnation falls from the throne of God.

Little children don't have that record. In Jonah 4:11, "Should I not have compassion on Ninevah, the great city on which there are more than 120,000 persons who don't know the difference between their right and left hand, as well as many animals?" There are people there, God says, who deserve compassion because they don't know the difference, they don't know the difference between their right and left hand. He's speaking of those who are infants, or those who are mentally incapable of understanding truth. And God says they deserve compassion because of that condition.

In Deuteronomy 1:39 God talks about your little ones who have no knowledge of good or evil. There's a point in life when you don't have the knowledge of good or evil, you haven't reached that condition of accountability. Similarly in Isaiah 7:16..."Before the boy will know enough to refuse evil and choose good," and so forth.

Infants who die then have never had anything written in the record because they've never committed the deeds, conscious deeds of rebellion and iniquity. God knows at what point they become accountable. Infants who die have been protected by God's providence from committing those deeds, those responsible acts of sin by which they would be condemned. And listen, there is no place in the Bible where judgment is based on any other grounds than the deeds of sin. It's true they're sinful by nature, but the account against them that condemns them is their deeds. God doesn't charge people with actual sins until they commit them.

Now listen, salvation then is by grace completely apart from works. Damnation is by works completely apart from grace. Infants have no sinful works to fill the books and condemn them. So I say this, if a baby dies, that baby is elect...instant heaven. Now you know why I answered Larry's question the way I did.

Let me read you something in closing. Written in 1907 by R.A. Webb, listen to this. "If a dead infant were sent to hell on no other account than that of original sin, there would be a good reason to the divine mind for the judgment because sin is a reality. But the child's mind would be a perfect blank as to the reason of its suffering. Under such circumstances it would know suffering but it would have no understanding of the reason for its suffering. It could not tell itself why it was so awfully smitten and consequently the whole meaning and significance of its sufferings being to it a conscious enigma, the very essence of the penalty would be absent and justice would be disappointed, cheated of its validation," end quote.

Yes, children are born sinners. Their death proves that. But never being able to understand the truth and therefore consciously rejected and choose rebellion, they have no record against them in the books of God and they then constitute a marvelous and vast opportunity for sovereign grace to operate apart from any works at all.

So here's a final summary. All children who die before they reach the condition of accountability by which they convincingly understand their sin and corruption and embrace the gospel by faith are

graciously saved eternally by God through the work of Jesus Christ being elect by sovereign choice, innocent of willful sin, rebellion and unbelief by which works they would be justly condemned to eternal punishment. Get the tape if you want that again.

So, when an infant dies, he or she is elect to eternal salvation and eternal glory. So dear one, if you have a little one that dies, rejoice. Count not your human loss, count your eternal gain. Count not that child as having lost, but having gained, having passed briefly through this life untouched by the wicked world only to enter into eternal glory and grace. The true sadness should be over those children of yours who live and reject the gospel. Don't sorrow over your children in heaven, sorrow over your children on earth that they should come to Christ. This is your great responsibility, your great opportunity.

Father, thank You again tonight for these dear people, how they love Your truth, how my heart is filled with love toward them for that fellowship in the Word that we embrace and enjoy. How I thank You for their eager hearts to know, to apply and to proclaim truth. I thank You for every little life that has passed through this congregation, every little life that was miscarried and passed in to Your eternal presence through the election of sovereign grace, every little life that died around the time of birth, some of them held in the tender arms of a mom and a dad in a time of sorrow and yet rejoicing for that little one who passed through the world without the burden of sin. Thank You for every parent, for every little one that lived for months, or years and then was snatched away, taken into eternal rest, awaiting reunion, many cases with parents they never could know but shall forever enjoy. And for those children who lived a few years and died through an illness or an accident and were gathered into Your eternal arms, we thank You as well. You are a God who by nature saves, You show us that in so many ways. And this exhibit of sovereign grace is a massive evidence of Your compassion on sinners. You have saved those who have no ability to remedy the sin they've inherited and must be cast upon Your mercy, and so it is that You save us the same way, only for us You impart conviction, repentance and faith in Your Son who was our Savior and the Savior of all the little ones who died, for this great grace, for this rescue particularly from pagan countries, idolatrous and godless societies we praise You, we thank You and we glorify You for this abundant grace. In our Savior's name. And everybody said...Amen.

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