

Thank You Terri!

Terri Schiavo died around 9:00 a.m., on the last day of March, 2005. My first response was to borrow the words of President Roosevelt from December 7, 1941, "This is a day that shall live in infamy." On second thought, I came to the realization that some important lessons have been learned and as painful as it may seem, we can still lay claim to Romans 8:28, which says, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."* In many instances of life we will do all that we possibly can, but when things turn out differently than we presumed, remember God did not stop being God. He is still on the throne. I don't always practice what I preach; I preach against worry, but then I worry. I believe that God is going to do something and then when He doesn't, I sometimes fail to trust Him in disappointments. God's sovereignty and knowledge so far supercedes ours that there are times, as the old saying goes, "when we cannot see His hand, we can trust His heart." *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:9). Please don't misunderstand me, I am not saying God ordained things that happen which are contrary to His will and way, but God is never limited to finding a way to bless the obedient Christian in the midst of catastrophe. A good verse that relates to this is Habakkuk 3:2, *"O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."* The ancient prophet is reminding us that God is willing to bless a righteous man or woman in the midst of an unrighteous nation. He will hear the cry of the obedient like He heard the cry of the children of Israel under persecution in Egypt.

So, let us learn to salvage God's plan no matter what the outcome. When I was attending college in Indiana, my first job was reclaiming damaged metal. I would fire up my acetylene torch and search for metal in the junk yard that had been made improperly or damaged. For instance, I would find a long pipe that had been severely bent on one end. Well, it did not take rocket science to know we cut off the bad end and saved the good. So, even today, I am thankful for the lessons young Terri Schiavo has taught us. My prayer is that we will wake up, open our eyes and learn three simple facts:

I. Value life.

In the beautiful fiction of Dr. Suess' *Horton Hears a Who*, we see that the smallest who in Whoville saved their world by letting his little voice be heard. Toward the close of this children's book, the elephant said, "They've proved they are persons, no matter how small. And their whole world was saved by the Smallest of All!" I have believed that this case in Florida could have the same effect of the 1973 Roe versus Wade Supreme Court decision that broke the barriers down for abortion. The difference is in the Schiavo case, we are effected in the other direction in an atrocious thing called euthanasia or mercy killing. A life is precious to God. The value cannot be measured in the size, intelligence, or outward beauty. *"But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; ...for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart"* (I Samuel 16:7). Value cannot be measured by man's estimation of worth. Satan is referred to as a destroyer of life; Christ is the one who not only gives life, but gives it abundantly as Christ said, *"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10).

II. Save life.

When in doubt, play it safe. The 1964 modern up-date of the Hippocratic Oath taken by many doctors has a paragraph that reads, "I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of over treatment and therapeutic nihilism." To understand what doctors are swearing to uphold, we need a definition of the word: nihilism. It is the belief that there is no meaning or purpose in existence or the general rejection of customary beliefs in morality, religion, etc. As best we can explain, the interpretation of this oath is to apply all measures required without, on one hand over treating (feeding is not over treating), or on the other hand he or she cannot withhold treatment

from a person they deem unworthy of their personal definition of quality life. In effect throwing moral and religious customs to the wind, while taking the role that belongs only to God. God says, "*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" (Micah 6:8). Interesting contrasts are taking place that parallels the event of the past couple of weeks. Physicians are fighting to protect and give aid to Pope John Paul II. Prince Rainier of Monaco has given the reins of his authority to his son, while physicians fight to keep him alive. All life is precious to God. The Bible says, "*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*" (Micah 6:8). Let us be like God and *love mercy*, not just for some, but for all.

III. Love life.

God's Word says, "*For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it*" (I Peter 3:10,11). Part of loving life from Peter's definition is to eschew evil, which means to despise the conduct of evil and to do good. The wedding vow we take is to love and cherish our spouse until death. Did you notice a sickening in your heart to understand that Terri's husband deserted his sick wife to cohabit with another, even fathering two children? Those who love life are also those who hate evil practices and do the right things. One sad statement that might have gone unnoticed by many in the public was when the attorney at law for Terri's former husband said after they pulled her feeding tube, "Now Terri can begin the death process...." This statement may sound benign, but listen carefully. By his own words he confessed what they were doing was administering death. Terri was not dying. They instituted the death process, by their own admission.

It is socially acceptable to fight for the lives of whales and what was done to Terri would not be permitted for our pets. Many are in favor of withholding the death penalty until DNA testing can prove a man innocent. Yet, this past week we witnessed the courts of our land passing by even the remotest possibility that some form of recovery was possible for Terri. What are we teaching our children? How do we explain a culture that endorses the least of us or sickest of us as "throwaway lives." Have we indeed become a culture that is "In Love with Death" (The name of the article by Peggy Noonan, consult March 24 issue of Wall Street Journal)?

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

- Pastor Pope -

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