

4. Neutrality and Denial: 33-42

Verse 33: What a verse. Solomon was right when he said there is nothing new under the sun. In the year 2026, we have people that will kill you because they disagree with you. The human heart was sick in Peter's day, and it's still sick today. Jeremiah tells us that we can't even understand it. I am afraid that we are going to see more and more religious violence in America and around the world in days to come.

Greek, Cut, enraged, furious are all translations of the word **diapiro**. This word means to exasperate, cut to the heart, to saw asunder. The power of the Word of God is the catalyst for this conviction. When sin is exposed and the truth rendered, the anger of the sinners is aroused. This is the reason that Charlie Kirk was slain. These Jewish leaders took counsel and minded and intended (Boulomai) to slay, put to death, take away, murder, and abolish the disciples and their message. The conviction of the Word is why preachers, apologists are hated and genuine teachers of the truth are targeted.

We do not promote violence of any kind, but we are called to defend the truth and yourselves. The days are short, and the prophetic words of scripture are coming truth. The same Jesus that told Peter to put his sword away after cutting off the soldiers ear is the same Jesus that spoke these passages:

Matt 10:34-39

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn

"a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,

a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—
36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

37 "Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

NIV

Luke 22:35-37

35 Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?"

"Nothing," they answered.

36 He said to them, "But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one.

37 It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment."

NIV

Jesus knew there was a time coming when the gospel would be offensive. The disciples were standing in a room with hostile killers because of healing a crippled man and preaching the truth (**κηρυγμα, Kerygma**).

Many of you have told me that things I say and post on Social Media are too forceful. What kind of Shepherd doesn't warn his sheep? This attempt to kill the disciples is still happening today. We are no different than the Messiah.

Luke 13:26

31 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you."

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John 7:19-20

Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?"

20 "You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?"

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Verse 34: We are here introduced to a man named Gamaliel. Bibleinfo.com has a great section on Gamaliel in their introduction on this Pharisee.

Gamaliel was an influential Pharisee and an expert of the law in the Jewish religion during the days of the Apostolic Church. He was also a key member of the highest Jewish council called the Sanhedrin.

Gamaliel was Saul's mentor and teacher before he was converted and changed his name to Paul. So, Gamaliel was often referred to as Rabbi, which means "teacher" in Hebrew. Additionally, the name Gamaliel means, "God is my reward or recompense."

Here are some lessons we can learn from various accounts recorded in the Bible about Rabbi Gamaliel:

Boice says that Gamaliel was a wise man, gracious, and understanding come but his advice was still only worldly advice. It did not deal with the real issue. It did not go far enough. Gamaliel should have said everything he did say, but he should have added, and in the meantime, since we are so closely tied to this and are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the nation, let's investigate

this matter and see whether what these men are teaching is true. If there's nothing to do, then we will let it run its course. It will go away. But if there's something to it, if Jesus really did rise from the dead, then our doctrines wrong (Boice, p. 109-110).

This man was an unexpected ally and blessing to the disciples. His advice actually may have saved their lives. We may speak of God's sovereign protection here. Boice notes that Saul (Paul) was still studying under Gamaliel at this time. I don't think it was possible but I speculate that it would be really cool to think Saul was in that room with his teacher. Of course Luke doesn't say a word about Saul but it's an interesting thought, and a possibility.

Gamaliel was a great professor and Rabbi. He was also influential and well liked. He was a good man it seems. How many times has God placed people like this in your life to help and protect you?

Bibleinfo.com describes Gamaliel:

- Verse 35: “**He was a Pharisee and Doctor of the law** (v.34) - And this made him respectable. He was learned and could express himself with conviction.” **Many young men I encounter think that they don't need an education to be in ministry. The scripture teaches that we are to be void of offense of God and man. Gamaliel had influence due to his position and wisdom. Most young men think their great preaching skills will make people follow them. Welcome to the ministry boys!*
 - **He had a good reputation** (v.34) - He must have been considered as one who had the interests of the council and Israel at heart, so they listened to his points.
 - **He was a man of authority** (v.34) - He “commanded to put the apostles outside.” He did not make a request here, yet his command was obeyed. This means that his authority was highly regarded in the council.

- **He was discrete** (v.34) - By asking the apostles to leave, he showed that he respected the council. He did not want to expose the discussions of the council to non-members, like the apostles. And this must have increased his credibility with the Sanhedrin.
- **He was wise** (v.35) - He gave good advice, asking the Sanhedrin to “take heed” but did not force his views on them. This was a sincere request that invited the council to reevaluate their decision and drew their attention to the rest of his argument.
- **He used history** (vv.36-37) - After winning the attention of the Sanhedrin, he used his deeper knowledge of history to present his points. He told the story of Theudas and Judas of Galilee who perished and whose followers eventually left them.
- **He was tactful** (v.38) - After presenting his case, he tactfully brought it to a conclusion, urging his colleagues in the right track by saying, “And now I say unto you...”
- **He was fearless** (v.38) - It required courage to speak against the Sanhedrin. His words “refrain from these men and let them alone” proved his boldness.
- **He warned the people of their danger** (v.39) – “He had previously stated that if the course is not of God then it would also fail. Then he warned them that if it be of God then you would not win since they can't fight God.” **And as we know, this gospel did spread and was of God. How many good Baptist do we know that fought against God and hinder the work of the kingdom just because they didn't like change or disliked their preacher? They really believed they were protecting **their** church, but were really fighting God.*
- **He was persuasive** (v.40) - Eventually, the council agreed to follow his wise counsel. Though they beat the apostles, they did not kill them.

When we read the grand and glorious epistles in the NT we are amazed at the all the teachings of Paul the apostle. Paul’s skills and knowledge of the OT are unmatched. Where did Paul get such an education? Well, it was from Gamaliel.

Acts 22:1-5

"Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense."
 2 When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.

Then Paul said: 3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. **Under Gamaliel I was thoroughly trained in the law of our fathers and was just as zealous for God as any of you are today.** 4 I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, 5 as also the high priest and all the Council can testify. I even obtained letters from them to their brothers in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

NIV

Acts 26:24-28

24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. **"Your great learning is driving you insane."**

25 "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

NIV

2 Peter 3:15-16

15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother **Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.** 16 **He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.**

NIV

Verse 41: Could we say with the Apostles that we would rejoice (**Chairo**) for the honor to be persecuted for the Name of Jesus. Usually, we as Christians, pout and sullenly call out to God about our unfair treatment. The life of a believer is different from the world's. Why would a person rejoice that they are persecuted for the Name of Jesus? Well, let's let the Lord answer that question.

Matt 5:10-12

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 **Rejoice** and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

NIV

Let me say this, I will not stop speaking in His Name.

1 Peter 4:12-17

12 Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.

13 But **rejoice** that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be **overjoyed** when his glory is revealed. 14 If

you are insulted because of the **name** of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. 16 However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but **praise** God that you **bear that name.**

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I have taught you and said many times that persecution identifies who the real believers are. Rejoice that one day you will be recognized by Jesus as an overcomer.

Verse 42: The original can literally be translated... “daily and daily in the temple and in every house the disciples did not cease from preaching Christ Jesus.” This is our pattern. This is our job. This is our mission.

The Importance of a World View

I want to introduce you to the importance of a biblical world view and the following may seem a bit unrelated, but it is not. Everything I am about to talk about happened in Acts chapter 4-5 and in the following chapters. The disciples and apostles had a biblical world view and their salvation experience set them apart from their persecutors.

I want to introduce you to several new terms so that you can be aware of where we are culturally. We have so lost touch with good doctrine, and tried to be like the world for so long- that we have lost the ability to reach the world.

In his book “How Now Shall We Live,” Chuck Colson explains this problem. In 1999, *Christianity Today* gave his book their book of the year award, only later to fall prey to the prophetic words in the book by becoming woke. **His words were prophetic.** This is an older look, but was so prophetic in its message, I wanted to share this with you. The younger generations today have been taught a flawed and destructive world view that not biblical and it is destroying our country. Many white women in their middle to late years are also rapidly succumbing to these destructive world views. We are living in a Liberal theological and political world where empathy is unrelated

to truth. We are living what Colson predicted. His thoughts are in full bloom.

Christianity in a Post Modernist World.

But antireligious pressure is not the worst of it. As we said, today's culture not only is post-Christian, but also is rapidly becoming postmodernist, which means it is resistant not only to Christian truth claims, but to *any* truth claims.

Postmodernism rejects any notion of a universal, overarching truth and reduces all ideas to social constructions shaped by class, gender and ethnicity.

Once again, the shift to this new philosophy has been breathtakingly rapid. In the 1960s, the percentage of young people going to college suddenly surged, and attitudes once held only by the intellectual elite suddenly became common coinage. The philosophy of **existentialism**, a precursor of **postmodernism**, swept the campuses, proclaiming that life is absurd, meaningless, and that the individual self must create his own meaning by his **own** choices. **Choice was elevated to the ultimate value, the only justification for any action.** America became what one theologian aptly described as the “imperial republic” of the autonomous Self.”⁷ (We began to hear the phrase “*there are not moral absolutes,*” (*emphasis mine*).

It was a small step from existentialism to postmodernism, in which even the self is dissolved into the interplay of the forces of race, class and gender. Multiculturalism is not about appreciating folk cultures; it's about the dissolution of the individual into the tribal group. In postmodernism, there is no objective, universal truth; there is only the perspective of the group whatever the group may be: African-Americans, women,

gays, Hispanics, Whites, and the list goes on. In postmodernism, all viewpoints, all lifestyles, all beliefs and behaviors are regarded as equally valid. Institutions of higher learning have embraced this philosophy so aggressively that they have adopted campus codes enforcing political correctness. Tolerance has become so important that no exception is tolerated.

But if all ideas are equally valid, as postmodernism insists, then no idea is really worth our allegiance; nothing is worth living or dying for - or even arguing about. And this climate of apathy can actually make it harder than ever to witness to the truth of Christianity. In the past, Christians proclaiming their faith might expect to encounter a vigorous debate over the rational grounds for belief, but today, the same message is likely to be met with bored indifference.

This is exactly the attitude I witnessed when I spoke at Yale Law School in 1996. A few fearless Christian students had organized a forum to address their provocative question of how Yale had contributed to undermining the rule of law. (It was at Yale that Critical Legal Studies was born, deconstructionist movement to strip the law of any objective meaning.) When the students invited me to speak, I wondered if the meeting might erupt into a riot - or, at least an unpleasant confrontation.

Colson shared his concern with Stephen Carter, the brilliant Yale legal scholar. A committed Christian. Dr. Carter told him not to worry.

“But I’m going to tell them that there can be no basis for law without a Christian consensus, or at least a recognition of natural law,” I said.

Carter smiled patiently. “When these kids come to Yale, they are taught that the law has nothing to do with morality. And

they accept that. So you can have your opinions and they'll find those interesting, but they won't even bother to argue."

When I arrived at Levensen Auditorium, shortly before eight o'clock, the hall was full. Down in front were perhaps two hundred townspeople, most of them Christians, I supposed, and then row on row of students. As I spoke, I searched the students' eyes, hoping for some sign of engagement. Nothing. As I progressed into my material, I became more provocative, but they remained impassive.

During the question-and-answer period, no one challenged a single premise I had advanced. Most of the queries came from the Christians in front rows. Carter had sized up his students well. They listened politely, took a few notes, then packed up their papers and quietly slipped out of the auditorium.

How did we get here? (Theism vs. Naturalism)

Theism is the belief that there is a transcendent God who created the universe.

Naturalism is the belief that natural causes alone are sufficient to explain everything that exists.

From Naturalism we get:

1. Moral relativism – Personal preference is king. We, as Christians, believe in an eternal moral standard.
2. Multiculturalism – All cultures are morally equivalent. Each culture is reflecting its own history and experience. Postmodernism and multiculturalism are contemporaries of Naturalism.
3. Pragmatism – Whatever works best is right. The end justifies the means. Christians do not conduct themselves by what is best or easy – we conduct ourselves according to what is right.

4. Utopianism – If we create the right social and economic structure, we can usher in an age of harmony and prosperity. Christians cannot accept this. Sin is real and must be dealt with. Human nature is corrupt, and we are totally depraved without God.

Quote Colson:

“This-world perspective.” Naturalists consider only what happens in this world, this age, this life. But Christians see things from an eternal perspective. Everything we do now has eternal significance, because one day there will be a judgment, and then it will become evident that our choices in this life have consequences that last into eternity.

We do not have time in one message to speak of all the evils that come from or formed other thoughts and world views. To mention a few – Nazism, Fascism, Communism, liberalism, and all our favorites.

Secular Humanism

Secular humanism, too, is a worldview, John Dewey in “*A Common Faith*” said: “Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains to make it explicit and militant.”⁸⁷

Margaret Sanger represents that aspect of secular humanism that could end up killing more people than Nazism, fascism, and communism combined.”

Sanger is the founder of Planned Parenthood an organization responsible for the death of millions of unborn human beings, and the killings continue with no end in sight. Secular humanists have slaughtered the innocent in order to further the sexual revolution. Sanger, Mary Calderone and Faye Wattleton have all been

accorded the honor “Humanist of the Year” by the American Humanist Association, and all three were heavily involved in promoting the revolution.

(Also, creator of Planned Parenthood and a publication, “The Woman Rebel”)

Thank God this is the secular world only that believes these things, right? Wrong!

On November 14, 2004, Evangelicals and LDS (Latter-Day Saints) sat together in Salt Lake Tabernacle to discuss The Exclusivity and Sufficiency of Jesus Christ – The title of Ravi Zacharias’ message.

In this debate, President of Fuller Theological Seminary, Richard Mouw apologized to Mormons because Christians have tried to evangelize the LDS.

We do not need to read into this, but only take out what is apparent from the Mormon newspapers. I'll let the *Deseret Morning News* give their own view on this event: **“It'll be Mouw, not Zacharias, that Utahns will remember.** He offered “a stunningly candid apology to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and [noted] that ‘friendship has not come easily between our communities.’” He dubbed the evening ‘historic’ and apologized that evangelicals have often misrepresented the faith and beliefs of the Latter-day Saints.” (underlines added).

Mouw said: “*Let me state it clearly. We evangelicals have sinned against you,*” he said, adding both camps have tended to marginalize and simplify the others’ beliefs.

[Source: <http://deseretbook.com/mormon-life/news/index>]

Evangelical preaches at [Salt Lake Tabernacle November 15, 2004] By Carrie A. Moore (Deseret Morning News).

“*We've often seriously misrepresented the beliefs and practices of members of the LDS faith,*” he said. “*It's a terrible thing to bear*

false witness... We've told you what you believe without first asking you" (Evangelical, LDS find bit of common ground by Kristen Moulton The Salt Lake Tribune, 11/15/2004), (Another Testament of Jesus Christ).

IN NOVEMBER 1997, FORMER PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER, IN A TELECONFERENCE INTERVIEW WITH SEVERAL RELIGION WRITERS FROM ACROSS THE NATION, SAID THAT MORMONS ARE CHRISTIANS AND THEY SHOULD NOT BE THE TARGETS OF "PROSELYTIZING." (Carrie Moore, "Are Mormons Christians." Deseret News, Nov. 15, 1997).

During the interview, Carter, a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher, said that SBC leaders are wrong in characterizing Mormons as non-Christians. "Too many leaders now, I think, in the Southern Baptist Convention and in other conventions, are trying to act as the Pharisees did, who were condemned by Christ, in trying to define who can and who cannot be considered an acceptable person in the eyes of God. In other words, they're making judgments on behalf of God. I think that's wrong." Carter testified that "the people in my own local church have no interest in trying to condemn Mormons or trying to convert Mormons to be good old Baptists like me." Carter criticized SBC leaders for becoming "narrow in their definition of what is a proper Christian," and for believing "that every verse in the Bible has to be interpreted literally.

The former philosophies have infiltrated the hearts and minds of our own, If they are our own!

I have one more group I want to mention before I give you a biblical response.

This "Seeker Sensitive Group"

They have the right heart, I'm sure, but the wrong method.

Defined: Seeker Sensitive

A part of the Church Growth Movement characterized by:

- a) Tailoring a church to the perceived needs of the more affluent members of the Baby Boom Generation,
- b) Minimizing the Gospel of Christ so as not to offend them.
- c) Altering worship services to be entertaining and make Yuppies feel good about themselves.
- d) Providing a multiplicity of church social and recreational “ministries” to serve this constituency, including secular counseling and sports teams.
- e) Today we have toxic empathy. This is empathy without truth.

Scripturally there is only one Seeker in the Bible. Jesus – He came to seek and save that which was lost.

- The Bible says no one seeks God.
- Ephesians 2 tells us man is dead in trespasses and sins. Men are spiritually dead to God.

Armenian Theology puts man’s choice of God as supreme.

Hyper Calvinism – destroys man’s volition and passion for evangelism.

* The “User Friendly Church” is not biblical.

Pastor Brad Smith – www.letusreason.org rightly notes –

The seeker parables in the bible of the lost sheep, coin and son have man as the main seeker – Not God.

In Genesis 1-3 after the fall man runs from God not to Him.

Adam - Where are you?

- We are called fishers of men. I have never had fish jump in the boat – They do not seek the frying pan!

—The rich young ruler was set right by Jesus when he went away sad. Jesus told him the truth. Seekers say Jesus didn't do church right – he let a big tither get away.

A Biblical Response to Today's Culture

Acts 5:29-33, 39.

Things we must preach: The Kerygma!

1. Obedience to God.
2. The Name of Jesus. There is no other name under heaven whereby men can be saved.
3. The Blood – v. 28. The life is in the blood. There is only one perfect and suitable sacrifice- the blood of Jesus Christ the Messiah.
4. The Cross.
5. The Resurrection.
6. Forgiveness of sins.
7. The Holy Spirit.
8. The Necessity of the Virgin birth.
9. God's Sovereignty v. 39
10. The need for an efficacious sacrifice.

Closing: Disturbing Fact: Barna – The Passion of Christ

- * 1 out of 6 say "The Passion" affected them in their religious beliefs.
- * 9% said they prayed more.
- * 8% said they attended more services.
- * 3% said they attended related activities.
- * Only 10% said they changed anything due to the movie.
- * A greater problem is the lack of evangelistic impact.
- * Less than 1/10 of 1% accepted Jesus due to the movie.

- * A lesser impact was the effort by those who saw the movie to evangelize.

Conclusion:

1 Peter 3:15-17

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

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Every believer, says Erwin W. Lutzer, in *Hitler's Cross*, should be able to give a rationale for faith, to declare Christ supreme over all other alternatives. The alternative to the twentieth century humanistic worldview is Christ.

Lutzer **doesn't** think that a 2-hour Sunday morning church service will do it. He agrees with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who said.

We Lutherans have gathered like eagles around the carcass of cheap grace, and there we have drunk the poison which has killed the life of following Christ... In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, **still less than any real desire to be delivered from sin...**

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner... it is grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.¹¹³

(Amen!)

The question then becomes, is it worth the effort to live Christ 24 hours a day on one hand, or be a nominal Christian weenie or couch potato on the other - a spiritual or carnal Christian? Living Christ 24 hours a day is hard. Cheap grace demands the soft life. Living Christ demands discipline,

sacrifice, purity, prayer, witness, study, standing alone, and confrontation (Acts 17:16-17). But then the very “being” of life involves theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, and so forth. It demands that we follow Christ in these areas. This is exactly what the Bible teaches.

For example, in theology, Christ is “the fullness of the Godhead” Colossians 2:9. In philosophy, Christ is the “logos” of God (John 1:1-3). In ethics, Christ is “true Light” (John 1:9). In biology, Christ is “Life” (John 1:4). In psychology, Christ is “Savior” of the soul. (Luke 1:46-47). In **sociology**, Christ is Son (Luke 1:30-31). In **government**, Christ is “lawgiver,” Genesis 49:10). “King of Kings, and Lord of Lords” (Revelations 19: 16). In **economics**, Christ is “Owner” of all things (Psalms 50:10-12). In **history**, Christ is “Alpha and Omega” (Revelations 1: 8). None of these areas is secular. All are sacred because they are founded on Jesus Christ. Since Christ is the Fountainhead of all wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2: 2-3). All areas are open for Christian living and study.¹¹⁴

(Issues 2000 Evangelical faith and cultural trends in the new millennium)

Our two great enemies right now are apathy to God and forsaking the foundations of our faith in scripture.

Illustration:

One evangelist that ministered overseas says the last 20 minutes of every message is the quietest of all – when he focuses the people on the cross. A militant Islamist came to him and fell at his feet after praying to receive Christ. We will either stand up to the opposition and stand with truth or we will fail. Our mantra must be Romans 1:16-17

Rom 1:16-17

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

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