

## “Advancing Our Faith in an Age of Relativism”

### Introduction – Acts 17:16-23 (NIV)

**16** While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. **17** So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. **18** A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbling trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. **19** Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? **20** You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.” **21** (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.) **22** Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. **23** For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you.

This morning we are looking at this passage in Acts of the Apostle Paul presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ in the Areopagus. Here’s the description of this place:

Northwest of the city of Athens, Greece, is a small hill covered in stone seats. This area was once used as a forum for the rulers of Athens to hold trials, debate, and discuss important matters. This location was called Areopagus, a combination of the Greek words for “god of war” and “stone”: the Areopagus is literally “Ares’ Rock.” The equivalent to Ares in Roman mythology is Mars. By the time of Paul and the early Christian church, this location was under Roman control, so the spot was known as Mars Hill.

The older Greek term, Areopagus, was still used in Paul's day, mostly in reference to the council that met there. When Paul gave his famous address on Mars Hill, one could say this occurred both "at" the Areopagus and "in front of" the Areopagus. For the most part, however, the term Areopagus as used in Acts chapter 17 refers to the group of Athenian leaders and thinkers who met on the hill.

The purpose of the Athenian Areopagus was similar to that of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Both were groups of respected local men charged with investigating spiritual or philosophical ideas. Both groups were composed of distinct sects holding contrary beliefs in certain areas. Both were considered "conservative" in the sense of mostly defending the status quo. Both were used somewhat like a court to settle disputes and judge certain cases. Unlike the Sanhedrin, however, the Athenian Areopagus was primarily interested in defending a Greek concept of "the gods."

Paul was called to speak to the Areopagus when word of his teaching in Athens began to gain attention. While this council was involved in criminal trials, prosecution does not seem to have been their purpose in speaking with Paul. Rather, Paul was invited to present information that the Athenians saw as "new" (Acts 17:21). Whether the entire council was there or not, Paul's presence there was the result of interest, not hostility on their part. Paul used this opportunity before the Areopagus to deliver one of the New Testament's most dynamic moments of evangelism. Speaking of an "Unknown God," he tied the Athenians' search for truth to the reality of the gospel.

As one would expect, not all of those in the Areopagus who heard Paul accepted his words. Some, in fact, found his teaching of the resurrection laughable (Acts 17:32). Yet some of those present, including a man named Dionysius, believed what Paul said (Acts 17:34). Just as some of the Jewish Sanhedrin had heard the truth and accepted it (Mark 15:43; John 19:38–39), some of the pagan Areopagus members believed after hearing the Word.

Notice people actually listened to different ideas and debated! Something that used to take place in Western culture in colleges, universities and the public square but over the past few decades has been thrown to the wind!

Now if you don't agree with the liberal point of view you are labeled a fascist, a hater, a peddler of misinformation! You are not allowed to voice an opinion that differs from the decided on views! No debate, silence and canceling is the call!

## I. SETTING THE STAGE OF WHAT WE ARE UP AGAINST

How many have heard the term RELATIVISM? Here is its definition –

### RELATIVISM – *Cambridge Dictionary*

The belief that truth and right and wrong can only be judged in relation to other things and that nothing can be true or right in all situations.

### RELATIVISM – *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*

A theory that knowledge is relative to the limited nature of the mind and the conditions of knowing. A view that ethical truths depend on the individuals and groups holding them.

Here is an illustration of ideas out there:

“To be a conservative is, among other things, to reject moral relativism.” *Stated by Josh Hammer, MSNBC Newsweek, Oct 25, 2025*

GotQuestions.org has an excellent presentation of the question of what is moral relativism!

Moral relativism is more easily understood in comparison to moral absolutism. Absolutism claims that morality relies on universal principles (natural law, conscience). Christian absolutists believe that God is the ultimate source of our common morality, and that it is, therefore, as unchanging as He is. Moral relativism asserts that morality is not based on any absolute standard. Rather, ethical “truths” depend on variables such as the situation, culture, one's feelings, etc.

Several things can be said of the arguments for moral relativism which demonstrate their dubious nature. First, while many of the arguments used in the attempt to support relativism might sound good at first, there is a logical contradiction inherent in all of them because they all propose the “right” moral scheme—the one we all ought to follow. But this itself is absolutism. Second, even so-called relativists reject relativism in most cases. They would not say that a murderer or rapist is free from guilt so long as he did not violate his own standards.

Relativists may argue that different values among different cultures show that morals are relative to different people. But this argument confuses the actions of individuals (what they do) with absolute standards (whether they should do it). If culture determines right and wrong, how could we have judged the Nazis? After all, they were only following their culture’s morality. Only if murder is universally wrong were the Nazis wrong. The fact that they had “their morality” does not change that. Further, although many people have different practices of morality, they still share a common morality. For instance, abortionists and anti-abortionists agree that murder is wrong, but they disagree on whether abortion is murder. So, even here, absolute universal morality is shown to be true.

Some claim that changing situations make for changing morality—in different situations different acts are called for that might not be right in other situations. But there are three things by which we must judge an act: the situation, the act, and the intention. For example, we can convict someone of attempted murder (intent) even if they fail (act). So situations are part of the moral decision, for they set the context for choosing the specific moral act (the application of universal principles).

The main argument relativists appeal to is that of tolerance. They claim that telling someone their morality is wrong is intolerant, and relativism tolerates all views. But this is misleading. First of all, evil should never be tolerated. Should we tolerate a rapist’s view that women are objects of gratification to be abused? Second, it is self-defeating because relativists do not tolerate intolerance or absolutism. Third, relativism cannot explain why anyone should be tolerant in the first

place. The very fact that we should tolerate people (even when we disagree) is based on the absolute moral rule that we should always treat people fairly—but that is absolutism again! In fact, without universal moral principles there can be no goodness.

The fact is that all people are born with a conscience, and we all instinctively know when we have been wronged or when we have wronged others. We act as though we expect others to recognize this as well. Even as children we knew the difference between “fair” and “unfair.” It takes bad philosophy to convince us that we are wrong and that moral relativism is true.

## **II. SO HOW DO WE AS CHRISTIANS DEAL WITH THIS?**

I received this email a couple of weeks ago from a pastor in Minneapolis by the name of Ian. When I read it I couldn't agree more! This fits so well with Paul standing up at the Areopagus in Athens declaring his faith!

*I (Ian) have not written an article like this before – especially at this length. This morning I was awakened (I believe by the Holy Spirit) and these thoughts began to flow. So, I began to write. Doubtless, some (many) would disagree. I DON'T CARE. It is...*

### **TIME TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED**

Antisemitism is no longer the domain of fringe neo-Nazis. It's been woven into the fabric of modern Western liberalism. Today, it marches under the banners of climate zealotry, anti-Christian dogma, sexual confusion, lawlessness, and Marxist utopianism. It's a shapeshifting ideology with no foundation in truth - just rage, deflection, denial, and the endless vilification of the conservative “cause du jour.”

Even in the church, the fault lines are widening. Dispensationalism - the belief that God still has a covenant with Israel unique from the Church - is being eclipsed by Replacement Theology, which claims the Church has taken Israel's place in God's plan. Whatever your position is in this clash of doctrines, do not allow truth itself to get lost. In many

modern instances, Scripture becomes a weapon for ideology rather than a revelation of God.

Politically and culturally, the middle ground has evaporated. You're forced to choose a side - any side - so long as you are enraged and shout loud enough. The result? A society that celebrates ABSURDITY with moronic actions like:

- Tampons in boys' bathrooms.
- Drag queen story hours for toddlers.
- Men stealing women's podiums in sports.
- Criminals freed with no bail.

These are not symbols of progress; they're signposts of decay. We were told they wanted to go higher - turns out, they just wanted to dig deeper into depravity.

And so, truth has become the casualty in all this. Truth remains the one thing you can't say. Criticize Islamic ideology, and you're branded "Islamophobic." But call for Israel's destruction with chants of "From the river to the sea..." (literally a death chant) and you'll be praised for exercising free speech. Hypocrisy has become the moral code of the age.

Look at Australia. The Bondi Beach terrorist attack on Dec 14th 2025, wasn't just a tragedy, it was a revelation of cowardice to confront the issue. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's response turned out to be a lecture on "right-wing extremism" promising tougher gun laws. This wasn't leadership. It was evasion. He stepped onto the world stage at a moment that demanded courage, and instead, offered compliance.

This is what happens when truth is replaced by woke indoctrination. Our schools turn out a generation that can barely read or write, yet they're fluent in the doctrines of socialism, gender fluidity, and climate catastrophism. The media cheers them on. Universities reinforce the delusion. The "free thinkers" of the '60s would look conservative next to today's crusaders of chaos.

# **SO WHERE DOES THE CHURCH STAND IN THE CURRENT STORM?**

**1. We remember who we are. A people not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation.**

## **Romans 1:16 (NIV)**

**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.

**2. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the ideologies that enslave minds. Strongholds may have demonic roots, but their battleground is the mind and truth is our weapon.**

## **II Corinthians 10:3-5 (NIV)**

**3** For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. **4** The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. **5** We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

## **Ephesians 6:10-12 (NIV)**

**10** Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. **11** Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

## **II Corinthians 4:4 (NIV)**

**4** The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

**3. It's time to lift up Jesus above denominations, beyond rituals and religion.**

### **John 12:32 (NIV)**

32 But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

**4. To bring the power of the Holy Spirit with signs, wonders, that result in transformation, back to the forefront of our gatherings.**

### **Acts 2:42-43 (NIV)**

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. 43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

**5. To rediscover the Great Commission, not as a call to collect converts, but to make disciples.**

### **Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV)**

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

**6. Celebrity, event-driven Christianity must fade so that the full revelation of Christ can be revealed.**

### **John 3:30 (NIV)**

30 He must become greater; I must become less.

**7. The true Church, the ecclesia, that provides true koinonia, must rise again. Not a polished glossy “door buster” ticket sale to eternal life, but filled with conviction, power, and love anchored in truth.**

### **Acts 2:46-47 (NIV)**

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

**Because the world isn't waiting for us to blend in. It's crying out for someone to stand up and be counted.**

## **Conclusion**

So taking all this to heart we have a challenge before us to live out this gospel as Peter shares:

### **I Peter 3:15-16 (NIV)**

**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.

We must stand for the truth of who Jesus is!

### **John 14:6, 8:31-32, 36 (NIV)**

**6** Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."**31** To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. **32** Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." **36** So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.

And Jesus' prayer for us:

### **John 17:14-18 (NIV)**

**14** I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. **15** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.