

Scripture Reading: 2 Cor 10:3-5 “For although we live in the flesh, we do not wage war according to the flesh, ⁴since the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments ⁵and every proud thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Today is just such a day. In this series we have been demolishing strongholds; arguments that have set themselves against the knowledge of God and are making our culture sick and weak.

Introduction: In 2013, the ultra-progressive-activist Oberlin College postponed all classes after a student reported seeing a member of the Ku Klux Klan brazenly striding near the Akrikan Heritage House (along with 15 previous incidents of hate speech on campus). The sighting triggered moral outrage (as one might well expect). When investigated, the would-be Klansman turned out to be nothing more than a student wrapped up in a white blanket to keep warm. This turned out to be completely manufactured by radical activists who were actively stoking racial tensions in order to arouse public sympathy.

Oberlin College’s response to all this resulted in the college posting a list on their website of micro-aggressions that trigger victims. A microaggression is defined as any subtle comment/act to a minority group by someone in the majority group that (either intentionally or unintentionally) causes emotional distress, harm, violence.

In a 2012 survey of nearly 5000 students of color conducted by the University of Illinois, participants listed 800 microaggression comments made by fellow students that were interpreted to be racist or insensitive. **Looking at the list, it’s clear that some of the statements made to students of color were indeed offensive.** Clearly racist. **But** many of the statements were so vague and unobjectionable that the notion they would cause someone harm or be perceived as hostility or even violence stretches belief.

Two extremes to avoid: 1) Denial of individuals who experience real and frequent indignities by someone who is thoughtless or careless in their words. 2) Catastrophizing—which is a magnification of perceived offensive statements, many of which on their face are unobjectionable, inoffensive, and do not reveal the personal motives of the speaker.

Among these microaggressions were statements like:

- Where is your family originally from? (Microaggression meaning: “You aren’t a true American and you don’t belong”)
- There is only one race—the human race (MA meaning: “Denial of individual racial identity and ethnic being”)
- America is the land of freedom and opportunity for all (MA meaning: You, as a group, are too lazy to work and better yourself.)
- Don’t judge *me* by my racist ancestors (MA meaning: “I am excusing atrocities committed in the past, pretending they never existed”)—But God is not going to judge groups, he’s going to judge individuals. B/c individuals are culpable for their sins.

And the list goes on and on.

Transition: Microaggression complaints go hand-in-hand with what sociologists have called “Victimhood Culture.”¹ This Victimhood Culture is a new moral system seeking to supplant the previous one. And it ***must be distinguished from victims in culture***. Which we all recognize is the case (just talk to foster parents...).

Victimhood Culture: This moral theory encourages individuals to take minor and often unintended or otherwise inoffensive statements as *deeply personal attacks* that threaten the wellbeing and safety of the individual.

Historical Moral Systems: Sociologists categorize human cultures into three:

(1) **Honor Cultures** (examples: Ancient Rome; Medieval Europe; Pre-constitutional America)

- In an honor culture, worth and value are achieved through public exploits/heroic deeds.
- One’s public reputation in this system is of supreme value. Meaning, one’s worth and value is secured by open and public violence—usually in the form of some kind of duel or gang fight.
- This moral system has a high tolerance for private slights and suggested insults, but a low tolerance for public insults.

(2) **Dignity Culture**

- In a dignity culture, worth and value are inherent to the individual, having been bestowed by God (we hold these truths...)
- Public reputation is not as important, as the individual knows that public slights, insults, or slanderous accusations that are not true do not affect the individual’s God-given worth and value.
- This moral system offers a high tolerance for perceived insults and public aggression. Whereas honor cultures fiercely protect reputation through violent conformity; **dignity cultures fiercely respect and protect freedom to dissent, to disagree; to dispute (Freedom of Speech)**. Those in a dignity culture have thick skin because they know that a person’s worth is not invested by culture, not invested nor invented by the contrivances of culture, society, or whatever.

(3) **Victimhood Culture**

- In a victimhood culture, one’s value or worth is contextual—depending on whether they belong to a recognized victim-group.
- Public sympathy and recognition of victimhood status is at a premium; unlike honor cultures where reputation is achieved through public exploits and feats of heroism; In VC reputation is achieved through perceived exploitation.
- This moral system has a low tolerance for both public and personal insults or perceived aggression. (snowflakes)

¹ Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning, *The Rise of Victimhood Culture*.

- Justice is a matter of the offended group (and allied victim groups) “shame-storming” the alleged oppressor or offender. (cancel culture)

As Americans, historically we have transitioned from an old honor culture to a dignity culture (expressed in our founding docs)—and now have this major competitor—a competing moral system that is vying for the helm of control.

I would argue that despite its pretensions of social justice, Victimhood Culture is incompatible with the Christian faith. Why?

1. It offers a mistaken view of justice. On this view of justice, *retribution and cancellation* are the core—there is no mercy no grace, no redemption at the heart of it.

Hate speech is now defined as anything I disagree with that causes me emotional stress.

In the biblical system grace and redemption form the core of Christian justice. The justice of God seeks to redeem all parties before it's too late (**Retributive Justice**). God wants to pardon sinners and all offenders and redeem them by his grace.

Isaiah 1:16-17 “Wash yourselves. Cleanse yourselves. Remove your **evil deeds** from my sight. Stop doing evil. ¹⁷ Learn to do what is good. Pursue justice. Correct the oppressor. Defend the rights of the fatherless. Plead the widow's cause.”

Two things about this passage: Israel is losing its country (a nation that God himself started and covenanted with) for two reasons: (1) idolatry—they have replaced worship of the one true God with false idols. (2) injustice—corruption's corrosive effect can be felt at every level of Jewish society. The poor, the needy, the downtrodden and the disenfranchised are being exploited.

You better believe that God cares about justice.

Look at how Jesus treated those who were guilty of nailing him on the cross.

Luke 23:33-34 “When they arrived at the place called The Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁴ Then Jesus said, “Father, **forgive them**, because they **do not know what they are doing.**”

Both worldviews have a strong desire for justice and to right social wrongs—but while VC is driven by retribution and cancellation; the Christian worldview seeks to redeem the lost before people are judged in finality. It's not just *righting the wrongs* but *redeeming all who are in the wrong*.

Application: As Christians we seek God's justice by bringing the gracious and redemptive love of Jesus to unjust world.

We want all men and women to be reconciled to God in Christ.

Second reason Victimhood Culture is incompatible with the Christian Faith

2. People are damned into predestined **group identities** ensuring **perpetual discord**. If one's ethnicity, sexual preference, class, gender identity—those associations are viewed as the defining orientation of a person's life, then we can never experience the unity and concord that God wants humanity to have in Christ.

Our “oneness” despite our distinctiveness is God's vision for the human race.

Victimhood Culture seeks to re-segregate individuals into “safe spaces” so that they never have to experience the discomfort or indignity of entertaining contrary opinions or viewpoints. The result of this is a bitter, unforgiving spirit toward those perceived to be in the “oppressor” group. There is no hope for reconciliation in this worldview. None.

By contrast, the Christian vision for humanity is starkly different.

Gal 3:28 “There is no **Jew** or **Greek**, **slave** or **free**, **male** and **female**; since you are all **one** in Christ Jesus.” These were distinctions that, in the past, caused division—but now in Christ our differences are no longer dividing walls that separate us.

These distinctions, though they seem so important, are now non-essential distinctions. Not worth dividing over.

Eph 4:1-5 “Therefore I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, **bearing with one another** in love, ³making every effort to keep the **unity of the Spirit** through the **bond** of peace. ⁴There is **one** body and **one** Spirit—just as you were called to **one** hope at your calling— ⁵**one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, ⁶**one** God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.”

The source of our oneness and unity is not our group identity (race, gender, socio-economic status, or political ideology)—the source of our unity is the Spirit of God by the Gospel of God, who makes us one body in Christ.

God's vision for the human race is not to endlessly re-segregate us into identity groups who compete to see who has the greatest victimhood status. God's vision for us is that despite our differences—that we would all be unified in Christ; bear with one another in love, and make every effort—fiercely protecting the unity, the bond—the oneness we have in Christ Jesus.

And Victimhood Culture runs counter to God's agenda to unify the human race.

Application: We simply choose not to allow those non-essential differences to become barriers to fellowship.

Third reason Victimhood Culture is incompatible with the Christian Faith

3. It offers the wrong solution to a misconstrued problem. On Victimhood Moral Theory, what ails society is oppressive relationships (That's VC's original sin). This, obviously, is a Marxist point of view which has dominated every communist regime in modern history. This moral theory is the result of a secularist-marxist worldview which holds that the universe and human beings are nothing **more than matter in motion**; human societies only have two groups: those in power who oppress the peasant class; justice is then a matter of the **peasant class rising up and overthrowing those who are in power** in order to eradicate all forms of **inequity** from society—economically this is accomplished by transferring all wealth and the means of production to the state (government) for **redistribution toward equal outcomes**; the result expected is a utopia where everyone will have every material need met and the absence of free-market exploitation. And nothing, nothing could be further from reality in Marxist-socialist societies. **The results of which have been catastrophic for human dignity, worth, and productivity. Not to mention the death toll.**

Victimhood culture devalues, diminishes and dehumanizes men and women.

It's proposed solution to its alleged problem is wrongheaded

Here's the real problem and its solution:

Rom 3:21-24 "But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been revealed (God's right standard); attested by the Law and the Prophets (it's sworn testimony) ²²The righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, **since there is no distinction.** ²³ For **all have sinned** and fall short of the glory of God; ²⁴ they are justified (declared in the right) freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

So now, we that the real problem is not that there are oppressors in the world—that would only be a symptom of the real problem, which is universal sinfulness. All of us has sinned, gone astray each of us have turned to his own way.

And all then, must be justified freely by the gift of salvation (forgiveness of sins)—this is redemption that is in Christ Jesus alone.

Victimhood Culture supporters are actually right about at least one thing—there really are only two groups in society: but it's not Oppressor and Oppressed—it's saved and not saved. Born again and not born again. A child of God or Not a child of God.

He who has the Son has life...but he who does not have the Son stands condemned already.

Conclusion: Luke 4:18-19

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,

because he has anointed me

to preach **good news** to the **poor**.

He has sent me to proclaim **release** to the **captives**

and recovery of **sight** to the **blind**,

to set **free** the **oppressed**,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the **Lord’s favor**.”

Let’s pray:

God’s Spirit is present in this church body today in power and in the gospel to change our status from victims to victorious; from languishing to living—really living in the joy and freedom of the Son of God.

There’s good news for those who are spiritually poor—who bring nothing to the table—who come with open and empty hands. You can receive salvation today through faith in Christ alone.

There’s good news for those who are held captive—who feel trapped in sin, imprisoned by habits or failure. Or feel like you’re carrying a weight of abuse or pain that someone thrust upon you.

You can be freed from your captivity to the bondage of sin; freed from the burden of someone else’s judgment against you.

There’s good news for those who are spiritually blind—who’ve tried to figure it out, but like a blind person fumbling around in the darkness trying to find your way—Christ brings the light of truth.

You can have the eyes of your heart enlightened to see the truth that Jesus saves us from our sin and guilt. Will you cry out for it today?

For those who are oppressed by the devil—who have long been haunted by his scheming and the guilt that he has heaped.

You can be victorious in Jesus the Messiah. Will you embrace Christ?

This, we proclaim, is the year of Jubilee! The year of God’s grace and favor for all who believe.