

OpenTheo

Who's to Blame for the Atlanta Shootings?

March 22, 2021



Life and Books and Everything - Clearly Reformed

Kevin DeYoung podcasts solo this time to help us understand from a Biblical perspective the wickedness of the Atlanta shootings. He picks apart four threads that feed into how we measure culpability for heinous public crimes. And he helps us distinguish what should be condemned from what shouldn't. And of course, there are books. Learn what books about race and other ideas Kevin has been reading.

Life and Books and Everything is sponsored by Crossway, publisher of *Practicing Thankfulness: Cultivating a Grateful Heart in All Circumstances* by Sam Crabtree.

Pastor Sam Crabtree surveys the Bible's teaching on gratitude, demonstrating that every moment is an opportunity to observe, embrace, and appreciate with thankfulness the wondrous workings of God in ordinary life. *Practicing Thankfulness* includes 100 practical suggestions for practicing thankfulness in daily life.

For 30% off this book and all other books and Bibles at Crossway, sign up for a free Crossway+ account at [crossway.org/LBE](https://www.crossway.org/LBE).

Timestamps:

How to Be More Thankful [0:00 - 0:55]

4 Preliminary Comments on the Atlanta Shootings [0:55 - 8:49]

On Culpability [8:49 - 25:28]

Distinguishing the Bad Ideas from the Good [25:28 - 30:57]

Is the church to blame for this man's bad ideas? [30:57 - 36:25]

Bad Culpability Extrapolations [36:25 - 45:12]

Don't let the bad outweigh the good. [45:12 - 47:11]

Books [47:11 - 57:33]

Books and Everything:

Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair, by Duke L. Kwon & Gregory Thompson

More than Just Race: Being Black and Poor in the Inner City, by William Julius Wilson

Race and Covenant: Recovering the Religious Roots for American Reconciliation, by Gerald R McDermott

American Awakening: Identity Politics and Other Afflictions of Our Time, by Joshua Mitchell

Slaying Leviathan: Limited Government and Resistance in the Christian Tradition, by Glenn S. Sunshine

A World Without Email: Reimagining Work in an Age of Communication Overload, by Cal Newport

Transcript

[Music] Greetings and Salutations! This is Kevin DeYoung and you are listening to Life and Books and Everything Good to Have You With Us. I am going solo today. Collin and Justin are not here, but our faithful sponsor Crossway is grateful for them sponsoring today's episode.

I want to mention in particular, Sam Crabtree's new book, Practicing, Thankfulness, Cultivating a Grateful Heart in all circumstances. Certainly a timely word. We all need reminders to practice thankfulness, especially when it seems as if there are so many reasons to struggle and to forget thankfulness.

And so check out Sam's new books. Thanks to Crossway. Well, I want to talk mainly about the tragic events of last week, the shootings that took place in Atlanta.

Let me make a few preliminary comments and then spend most of our time ruminating about culpability and how to think through the moral ethical implications of who, what, why we should blame when tragic things like this happen. So first, some preliminary comments. Number one, of course, should be most obvious, but we do need to say it and mean it.

And that is to pray for victims. Hopefully that's not just a Christian expression or even a non-Christian expression thoughts and prayers, but we really do mean it. We throw around the word tragic to easily probably and devastating and trauma.

These words can lose their meaning, but they do have times when they're necessary. And this is one of them to have a shooter and a lead shooter. Take the lives of so many people is a tragedy.

And so we express the utmost grief and sympathy for victims, for their families. So that's the first preliminary comment. And that's maybe most important.

Second, right on the heels of that, we need to say that what took place and everyone is due their day in court, but it certainly seems to be the case and by his own admission that this young 21-year-old man took the lives of these innocent people and to do so is an act of extreme wickedness. It's evil. It's sin.

And we need to use strong biblical words at a time like this, especially. Now, not so much with this incident for reasons we'll see in a bit, but when these sorts of tragedies happen, seems like commentators often search for other sort of language and talk about the demons inside someone or what the culture was producing or even mental health issues, which are real. But it's important that we rely on strong biblical language, uses words like sin and iniquity, transgression, wickedness, evil.

Those are the right words to use to describe murder and murder on the murder of any life is a heinous egregious sin, let alone many. And so this is a wicked act of evil. Full stop.

The third preliminary comment to make is at least at the time being does not seem as this that this is about race. Now, one can understand why it certainly looks that way that what is at least six, I think, of the eight victims were Asian and there has been a rise in anti Asian sentiment and some cases violence over the past year. And so it's not unthinkable that this would be that sort of incident.

And it's not I'm not so interested in trying to parse out the motivation what we have are the words of the alleged shooter that it didn't have anything to do with race. Now, again, someone's just committed heinous acts of evil. So he may not be given the last word on his own mental and spiritual state.

But I think even seeing recently that the the FBI has so far said that it doesn't seem to be motivated by racial animus. And important to keep in mind, even with the rise of anti Asian sentiment that over the past year has not always been about white on Asian been a rise of in many cases, other ethnicities with anti Asian sentiment. So we just want to be careful that we don't automatically fall into what would be to some very familiar narratives that if the perpetrator is white and if the victims are not, that as a matter of course, it must be in act a hate crime.

It must be an act of racism. It could be and it doesn't seem to be at this point, which leads to a fourth preliminary point. And that is even if it's not, we certainly want to

express sympathy and understanding why many Asians and Asian Americans would feel as if it were and would be frightened, disturbed.

And so to say on the one hand that we shouldn't try to make every evil in this country be about race. It's simply not. And we don't want to make it be because that really minimizes you say, well, you're saying that because you're white Kevin, well, no, actually, because it it denigrates when there are clear incidents motivated by racism.

If everything is racism, then when we need to have these categories, they seem quite stripped of their meaning and of their impact. But even if that's the case, we certainly can sympathize with those who feel as if they have experienced this or they have friends or family members or it fits into a pattern in their own life or in our history. So just because this may not be doesn't look to be a case of racism doesn't mean that it's wholly inappropriate that people would be talking about that just to use an analogy if there had been a rise in anti pastor sentiment in the past year and some incidences of anti pastor violence.

And then there were shootings and several of the victims were pastors. You might say to me, well, statistically speaking, you're not at really any higher risk or look at the vast majority of people don't feel this way and all of those things could be true. And it may even be the case that it's wholly unrelated to any anti pastor violence.

But you can understand if I'm a pastor, I am feeling like here we go again. And if I've experienced it and other pastors have experienced it, and then here's this murder of yes, you connect the dots, you connect the dots emotionally, existentially, personally. So what I'm trying to say is on the one hand, we have this sympathy and understanding for those who see this, it doesn't come out of nowhere and at the same time, that doesn't mean that that's exactly what has happened in this case.

So those are some preliminary comments. What I want to spend most of this time ruminating as people do on podcasts is to talk about culpability. So again, I just think like a pastor and thinking list.

So let me make a number of points and see if any of this holds together as something helpful. So one, under this broad category of culpability. So we're asking the question, who, what is to blame when something like this happens? So first, we do not want to remove the personal aspect of individual agency that has to be where we start.

Now we'll go on to say, is that where we we end or land? Sometimes it is, but it's certainly where we need to start. Again, as I said a few moments ago, too often when these things happen, people talk in euphemisms about someone's personal demons or this sort of addiction or even mental illness, which mental illness is a real thing. And it's very complicated.

But we have to see human beings as responsible moral agents. So when we see something like this before, we are wanting to draw all sorts of other conclusions, when you say this was perpetrated by an individual acting with free will in a certain philosophical sense, my Calvinist, so not a libertarian free will, but a kind of free will meaning, as Turitan would say, not constrained by external coercion or compulsion. This is someone with a will making decisions.

So a person's individual agency, the person to blame for this is first and foremost, the one who committed these atrocious crimes and sins. That's the first thought under culpability. Here's a second thought, and that is that beyond that, we should be slow.

Now slow doesn't mean never necessarily, but it means slow, slow to size up a fast developing situation. And in the immediate aftermath, based on certain reports, which may later prove to be accurate or later prove to be not the whole story, or as these things unfold, sometimes proved to be inaccurate. We should be very slow to size up these fast developing situations and even slower to make sweeping conclusions.

So a great evil has been perpetrated. And quickly on the heels of that, it is all too easy in any of our hearts. And then it shows up online or commentary.

All of a sudden, we have it all sort of figured out this act is a part of something much bigger. And we have it sized up what is going on. When, as has been shown in similar tragedies, that what initially comes out is not always the case.

Again, it may be that what we heard from the very beginning with this shooting turns out to be exactly the case and then more details come out. So I'm not at all trying to make a case of defense for anyone simply saying that when the facts are still coming out, and even when all the facts are coming, we're going to get to this. We ought to be very slow to make sweeping conclusions about what this means.

Therefore, about the state of acts, the state of the country, the state of the church. We have this, this, this, atrocious act. And we come to immediate swift sweeping conclusions.

I surely think Christians ought to agree it is the better part of wisdom to wait. Surely this would be the time to weep with those who weep to pray to comfort the afflicted to think through our own heart. All sorts of appropriate things we would do before we say, aha, I read a couple stories, I saw a few tweets, I got a few quotes and here's how this fits into everything, which tends to always fit into the way we already saw things and is another piece of evidence for why the way we see the world with our enemies and our friends and our tribe and their tribe is accurate.

We really need to slow down. Here's a third thought thinking about culpability. It seems to me we go through a familiar pattern in this country when these things happen and

they happen too often.

Anytime is too often. We go through a familiar pattern of who is to blame. On one level, there's probably something therapeutic about this.

There is a way in which the human brain and psyche, especially in moments of profound grief, we need order. We need to make sense of this. I think there's a therapeutic impulse.

Can we make this which seems senseless, which seems frightening, which seems undecipherably evil? Can we put it in categories that seem familiar to us? We tend to find these things and put them into a familiar drama in which our side are the good guys and the other side are the bad guys. There is something instinctual about that. This is so evil.

If I can understand how this happens and it happens in a larger meta-narrative, the problem is not trying to put in a larger meta-narrative. I would say the problem is we're not going large enough. The larger meta-narrative, of course, is we don't not wrestle against flesh and blood.

The larger meta-narrative is the heart of man is desperately wicked who can understand it. That all creation is groaning. Put this into the bigger story of creation, fall, redemption, consummation, but we tend to put it into our own personal stories.

With that comes a tribal instinct. This is not just on one side or the other. It is a human instinct.

We see these things happening. It's like the Hatfields and McCoy's. This is evidence of those darn Hatfields.

This is what they're like. What one person has alleged to have done in this heinous act of wickedness becomes something of a tribal marker. It leads to this very perverse sense, if we're honest.

We feel this. We hear that there is some, you may hear on the news or scrolling across your screen or on your phone, there's some shooting. There's some horrible thing that has happened.

In a perverse way, you start to feel in your heart. I hope my side was the victim and their side was the perpetrator because if my side were the ones who were the victims, then that's good for me. This fits into my narrative and my tribe because being the victim is the way your tribe gets moral standing, the way your tribe advances.

We all understand what this is like. This happens far too easily in our culture. There is one side, there's one kind of jersey whose thought to warn those certain jersey.

Maybe police officers, white people, males, Christians, conservatives, maybe Jews

sometimes. There's a certain sort of, were they wearing that jersey? If those are the sort of people who did it, then that's the other team or those are my team. Then the people on the other side, blacks, Hispanics, Asians, women, immigrants, Black Lives Matter or the other side as Christian nationalists.

We have these distinct teams and the idea is to find your teammates being sinned against and the other team being the sinners. Again, this all takes a lot of careful thought because it's not as if oppression does not happen. It does.

It's not as if those lines of oppression haven't often gone in one direction versus another. But because of this tribal instinct, we want to see and make every story fit into this pattern because then we can feel, and again, I'm not saying this always happens in a sinister way that people are pulling. I'm saying this is what happens instinctually in human hearts.

Mine included. You want to see that this is evidence. This is more evidence that the sort of people and the sort of side I'm on are the ones being put upon by others or their side, the other tribe, the people with the other colored jerseys are the ones doing the bad things.

It's a very dangerous tribal instinct because if there's enough things that happen in the world, and if some media doesn't report on another media will, and everyone's got a phone. So if you're just if you're looking for your tribe to be victim and the other tribe to be oppressed, you will find lots of evidence of it. And it's a dangerous instinct.

Again, not that. I mean, it may be that in certain situations, those are the facts that that is in fact what happened that that sort of person was for these reasons, victimizing this sort of person. So it's not that the facts could never fit.

It's that as a tribal instinct, it is dangerous. There's also, and this is all under talking about familiar pattern of how this goes on when these things happen. I also think there's something in the human heart that wants to find a cause, wants to find a cause so that we can determine, well, here's why it happened.

And therefore, if we would have just done something different, this wouldn't have happened because that gives some sense of reason, rationality, control. Again, we all we all want this. So we want to try to make sense of these horrible sins and crimes by thinking, well, what was okay, a person did it.

Individual agency, but surely it's a product of something bigger. They must have been educated in some way to do this, radicalized, or they didn't receive a certain kind of education, or they were medicated, or they weren't medicated, or they got some bad counseling, or they needed counseling, or someone somewhere along the line was giving them wrong sorts of messages. All of these are reasons to say, if, if we had just done X,

this wouldn't have happened, or if we hadn't have done why, this wouldn't have happened.

And again, that's a very understandable, mental and spiritual process that we would go through. And it may be that some of those circumstances are discovered, or we realize things that could have made the situations less likely, or things that were said or done that made certain situations worse. But the instinct to want to find a larger meta cause is at least in part, because we want to, it's hard for us to think.

So these wicked people sometimes just, they do wicked things, and it comes from a heart that maybe couldn't have been stopped. That's a, that is a scarier way to live in the world, than to think that there might have been a plan or a program or something that could have been put in place, or there was the wrong thing that was put in place. And then this would have never happened.

So all of that is, I guess that was my third point under culpability. We go through this familiar pattern of thinking about who's to blame. Okay, here, getting into some of the issues that were going on, you tracked any of it online, and I really debated whether to say anything at all, but maybe it's helpful to at least think this through.

So the fourth heading here under culpability. Some people were quick to link this sin and crime and atrocity to other big events, institutions, movements, people. And so there was chatter that this person, because baptized member of Southern Baptist Church, which had links to nine marks or founders.

And so there becomes a quick developing narrative that this is not just one person. Okay, yes, he did it, or allegedly, we want to speak that way, but it sure seems that way. But no, this, this speaks to a much larger systemic problem in our conservative evangelical world.

So that was the argument, and that's why I want to talk, and I'm talking here about culpability. So how do we make sense of this particular argument? Okay, this person, the alleged shooter, belong to a conservative Southern Baptist Church with links to other conservative, reformed institutions, movements, schools. All right, so the first thing is we, we, we, and I'm speaking people like me, I'm not Southern Baptist, but I know some of these institutions and schools and movements.

So we, we should be open to seeing something uncomfortable about ourselves. The psalmist says, praise, let's see if there's any wicked way in me. So certainly it's always good to have a posture of humility, genuinely to say, okay, Lord, if this in the most horrendous way uncovers something that we maybe no one intended, but some kind of diabolical messages that we're contributing to this, oh, Lord, help us.

Help me. And so David French wrote a piece about purity culture and on the dispatch

and like a lot of things that David writes. I agree with a lot of it and I disagree with some of it.

And I guess I should say I didn't, I didn't, I grew up in a RCA kind of mainline, but mostly evangelical church and certainly had messages about modesty and waiting to have sex until you're married and sex is, you know, about the worst things you could do where you could get drunk, you could have sex, you could maybe rock and roll music, I don't remember. But certainly I heard some of those messages, but I didn't grow up in this, the kind of purity culture, the extreme sort of versions of it that I hear with the weird kind of rituals or I never remember somebody trying to blame women for men's sin struggles. So again, I hear some of the things and I want to say, yeah, that's a really bad idea or that's a bad thing to teach.

And I feel like we could really use some more Francis Turretin in our day. I love Turretin because he goes through in almost every question he's trying to answer. He will, well, not every, but so many, he starts by saying, we distinguish.

That's what I want to hear more Christians saying. We distinguish because he's always saying, okay, here's this theological question. And he'll say, I'm not, I'm not trying to answer this question.

I'm not trying to answer this question. Here's four things I'm not answering. Here's the one thing I am answering.

And so when something like this happens, and we hear about all these, these bad ideas, I want to say, well, let's distinguish. Okay, what is the bad idea? Is it a bad idea to give people a sort of gospelless Christianity that says if you are a sexual sinner, the rest of your life is in tatters and you have nothing but second best from God and for yourself and for others? Well, yes, that's a bad message. Is it bad to give women the impression that their dress is responsible for male sin or lust? Of course it is.

We must distinguish. Is it bad to talk about modesty in dress? No, it's bad to tell people to wait to have sex until they're married? Is it bad to tell people, well, if you have sinned and your body causes you to sin, cut off your arm, rip out your eye? I mean, that's Jesus. Now, when I preach on that, now I give a caveat.

Hey, Jesus is not talking literally. He's talking about the sort of violence, not against other people, but against your own sinful nature that you must have. So first we hear these, we must say, well, is this bad? Well, what are we talking about? Okay.

Yeah, we probably most everyone can agree that teaching that you're wanting to highlight that is bad. Let's not say that. But then there's a follow up question.

Well, was that bad idea that almost all of us can agree is a bad idea? Was that to blame for this sin here? Well, that's a much harder case to make. And then a follow up is, well,

how widespread is this particular bad idea? And this is where we must always be mindful of our own experience. So what, what I didn't experience, someone else might have experienced.

And so if you grew up hearing these sort of messages that are twisted about modesty and purity, and you see something like this, yet you can maybe drop down in that menu in your brain and say, wait a minute. This, this may be related to that. We get that, or we should.

But at the same time, you have to understand if you grew up with those bad experiences, you shouldn't assume that, well, that's what's always going on everywhere. Or anytime you see something that sniffs of that, it must surely be the case that that's what's going on here. What, what happens sadly too often is we end up talking about too many things at the same time.

And we were talking about too many things at the same time. And we're talking about them in the wrong medium Twitter. And we're talking about them in the most emotionally charged way.

So there's really important things that we should try to talk about. And we should try to talk about how do we talk about purity? How do we talk about sex? How do we talk about pornography? How do we talk about men and women? All these things. And let's find out who's saying bad things who say, but we try to have an important ethical theological biblical conversation in the most trying emotionally charged circumstances.

And in the medium that precludes the kind of nuance and listening and understanding that we need. So yes, we must be open to seeing is there something uncomfortable, but we also must distinguish the bad things, the bad theology that we can mostly agree on was that present here? And the church as far as I can tell has denied any of these sorts of ideas. Promoting them, promulgating them is moved to discipline this man who is a member of the church.

So there's at least two different ways. I mean, there's a thousand, but there's at least two different ways that this could have happened. I mean, so to jump to the conclusion that this man reported by one of the police officers, I think said he was eliminating temptation.

And to back that into what the culture and the product and everything that must have led him to that. Now, that's one way to think, well, he must have been at a sort of church or listening to the sort of people or he sort of, but that's one scenario. Isn't there another equally plausible scenario that a church was, was disciplining him, was trying to teach him, was trying to correct him, was warning him, was rebuking him, was trying to hold out the hope of the gospel.

So these arguments that say X is the culture of, or this is the product of, or this is in the air of these general arguments are almost impossible to refute, which doesn't make them better arguments, it makes them worse arguments. So we must be very careful. Might it be the case that the pastors or parents or youth group leaders, in this case, are more devastated and genuinely traumatized than almost anyone else, say for the victims.

So there is good biblical reason to be very careful about these arguments that quickly assign culpability upward and outward again. Let's, let's be willing to see if there's some bad teaching that found its way into these heinous acts. But we also know that people can claim inspiration from certain teaching.

People have claimed inspiration from Jesus to do all sorts of heinous things from the Bible to do all sorts of bad things. So just linking in someone's mind does not make it so. I'm thinking of Jesus good warning to us that with the measure you use to others, it will be measured to you.

And that seems an apt word. How would we want? What sort of measure, what sort of judgment, what sort of evaluation? Is there any parent out there who wants the measure that says the worst thing that your worst child does will automatically be an expression of your culpability? Is that the measure we want? Or what what pastor wants that measure? It's a truly frightening thing. Whether you have a 50 person church, 100 person church, a 1000, 5000 person church.

We take very seriously here at my church. We have everyone assigned to an elder and those elders are assigned to pastors. We have layers of care.

We make personal contact with people and we're at a fairly good sized church. We take very seriously that we will have to give an account before God for everyone's soul. We take discipleship seriously.

It doesn't mean we do it all right. Of course, no one does. But we take this very seriously and yet surely it's not the case that it I mean, it's a frightening thing to think that one of our 2000 members could go do something and that that would then be seen okay, not only by the world, expect the world, but by other Christians to automatically think that that then is something and a failure in your church.

Well, it perhaps, but perhaps not. Isn't it the case that Jesus had a 12 person church and one of them broke the law, betrayed him, committed suicide. So we're, I tell our people, look, we're not a cult.

We disciple you, we shepherd you. We follow up on you. We have to give an account for you, but we can't ultimately control your life.

And so I just think that the way we jump to these culpability connections, again, it's that

tribal instinct, we don't, we do it in in certain directions and not in others. So when a Muslim terrorist, especially post 9/11 and acts of terror were going on and by Muslim terrorists, by Muslims who were saying in published public forums, I'm talking about al-Qaeda folks, that this is why they were doing it. They were, I mean, one of the big differences here, no one, no one at all is saying anything except this was a horrible, egregious, sinful, wicked thing that happened.

So you have back when there's an after 9/11, you actually have some groups saying, no, that what happened there, these, these terrorism acts, that's good. That's a part of what we believe. That's a part of what we're trying to do.

And when that happened, many people rightly said, look, most Muslims are not like that. That's true. Or the Islam that most people practice is not like that.

Now, there's lots of the, the ideological arguments of what does Islam teach. But it's certainly the case that the most, that the Islam that most people practice is not like that. And most of your, you know, your Muslim neighbors are not going to be in all likelihood, terrorist threats.

So people rightly pointed that out, didn't they? To say, don't think that because these Muslims were doing it, and they were actually claiming to do it on behalf of Islam, don't think that this means that all Muslims are somehow culpable. Now, I'm just willing to, to guess that some of the same people that would have been very sympathetic to those good reminders might be some of the people, or some of the same instinct at least, that then when it comes to Christian culpability, it says, aha, but now this is a product of something nefarious that is in the air. When in fact, no one is celebrating, encouraging anything like this, people are rejecting it, castigating it, denouncing it wholesale.

So the measure you use is the measure that will be used to you, let alone that we could look at other sorts of events, infamous shootings, the shooting at the Pulse Nightclub in Orlando, the perpetrator was raised as a Muslim. Again, when that first came out, it looked like, well, this was a gay nightclub. I remember people telling me on Twitter, Kevin, you better say something because you've been outspoken that homosexuality is a sin and this is very painful.

Well, it turned out to be a man, at least it was raised as a Muslim who said he was doing it in retaliation for airstrikes in Iraq and Syria, and in some kind of allegiance to ISIS or ISIL, and there conflicting reports about whether this man was also gay or was sometimes seeking out gay liaisons. So should we then have automatically said, well, this is what's in the culture, this is what's in the air, or the Sutherland Springs Church massacre in 2017, the perpetrator there became, had raised in the church and became a militant atheist. He was trying to convert people online to atheism.

So there was it, well, this is what atheism does to people, it makes you murderers, Dylan

roof, the shooter in Charleston, he was raised in the ELCA, a mainline denomination. So is that what the mainline church does to people, it radicalizes them intellectually. We should certainly be open as more facts develop to see any sort of wrong theology that contributed in any way, of course, but intellectually, I think most of us in our sainer, calmer moments could say, this is not the way we want to draw these connections.

We don't, we don't do it with a host of other shootings. People do unbelievably horrible evil things for all manner of reasons that spring all out of their heart, their, their hatred, their sins, and whatever we can learn and whatever we can do to make them less likely, certainly we can do. But there's a difference between someone being an accomplice to a crime.

There's a difference between ideas or rhetoric encouraging sin and words wrongly being claimed in support of some sin. And then simply being associated with the sort of people that are associated with things that you think might have contributed to this. It's, it's not a way to make arguments, you know, bereft of more facts to come.

It's not a way intellectually or spiritually. It's not the measure that we would want used to us. Seems to me from what I can tell that the, the pastor and the people of the church where this man led shooter was a, was a member, need our earnest prayers and support and gospel encouragement.

And the man who did this to meet the fullest extent of, of the civil law and pray for his soul before God. So the, the accusation which can too easily be made that this is either the product of some really bad teaching about men and women, or this is this is just more evidence that there's no ethics, there's no discipleship, there's no emphasis on orthopraxis, all these conservative churches, they're just all about getting their theology right. That's really an impossible standard.

I mean, do we know that's the case? But before we make those sorts of allegations about either a church, maybe some people quick to say, no, no, no, the church was probably good, but it's, it's, it's big Eva out there. Well, yeah, it's always the more you can make it about the big, bad people far out there. Well, then that's an argument that's very difficult to disprove.

And it's an argument that's going to be more palatable for our tribalistic moment. And it, and it happens in both directions. I admit, I think as a pastor, I do think with sympathy for pastors, when there's horrible pastors, call that out.

When I see them, they say horrible things, call that out. But it's an impossible standard to think that every bad case, whether it's every bad male, every bad white person, every bad Christian, every bad southern Baptist, every bad, whatever tribe, to say every bad case is proof of something larger and deeper and more wicked, where every good case, even if the good cases may be 10,000 to one above the bad cases. They don't count all

because you don't hear, you just don't, you don't have headlines.

You don't hear stories about another transform self sacrificing, worshiping Jesus following person. No, so those don't get weighed in the balance. Again, I'm almost done with all this here.

So I'm repeating myself, but it, it's not that there's nothing one could learn or that churches can't be bankrupt in their discipleship or that churches can just focus on getting your doctrine right and they're completely devoid of ethics or teaching people how to live or what it means to follow Jesus or all of those things can and do happen and where they happen, we should, there it is, don't do that. That's bad. But it is impossible for the church to have, I don't say it's impossible because Jesus builds his church and God has a way of saying it's unwise, it's inappropriate, it's unfortunate.

When we speaking of Christians do this to ourselves to say that bad thing confirms everything that I think is wrong and whether or not there are, I mean, if that's, if there's some teaching product that produces that, why does it not produce that except almost virtually never? And we don't hear the stories upon stories of men and women in churches who, yes, there's always every pastor I know, this one at the head of the list is imperfect and sinful, but real lives transformed, real churches doing good in their community, real churches following Jesus, real churches speaking the Bible to help people get their heads right and their hearts right and their hands right, all of those things. So it's a caution for us before we make these culpability connections so swiftly, so quickly. All right, let me, let me wrap up.

You didn't think I could go and talk as long all by myself? Well, I am a pastor, I can't. Let me just mention some books books. What have I been reading lately? I'll just mention them in a couple categories.

So I've been reading a number of books about race. I just finished Duke Kwan and Greg Thompson's book on reparations. I'm not going to say any more about that because I hope to write a review on it in the next couple of weeks.

I read William Julius Wilson's book more than just race being black and poor in the inner city. He is a professor at Harvard. I think he's someone that those on left of center politically would trust and appreciate.

It's a thoughtful book and what's whether I'm not learning enough on all of the things he talks about to adjudicate his arguments. But as the title suggests more than just race, what he's trying to show is that being black and poor in the inner city is the product of all sorts of circumstances. And I think that's really helpful whenever we talk about almost any societal issue.

The more we can move off of mono causal. So if you're thinking about racial disparities,

well, it's just fatherlessness, pathologies in the family, that's the problem. Or the reason for racial disparities, it's Jim Crow, it's slavery, it's white privilege, it's ongoing racial injustice.

I think the more we can move away from mono causal explanations and say, you know what, there's probably dozens of explanations on a macro level on a micro level. So anyways, I think Wilson does some of that in this book. And it was, I skim through it quickly reading the conclusions in each chapter and skimming through the rest.

But there's that I read the book edited by Gerald McDermott, race and covenant, recovering the religious roots for American reconciliation. I'm not sure I'm convinced by the overarching theme of the book that America is in a covenant with God. So that's a big theme to recover this idea of a national covenant in scripture and history.

I guess if covenant means God deals with nations, and he deals with nations to judge them for unrighteousness. And he does bless nations that are obedience. If that's the basic covenant idea, I think that's helpful.

But if we're talking about an established covenant from God, the United States, I do not think is in a covenant with God in that biblical sense. The nation of Israel was the church is having said that, you could say this book is sort of a, again, a conservative response to some of the racial conversations. So there's some really good articles from a number of African American conservatives, Glenn Lowry and others.

Yeah, so I think like any book that's edited, there are some chapters that I underlined a lot and others I thought, I'm not sure I agree with that. But race and covenant, it's worth reading. Similar, it's a book by Joshua Mitchell, a American awakening identity politics and other afflictions of our time.

Joshua Mitchell actually wrote a chapter in the previously mentioned book along the same theme. It's interesting book in that Mitchell, who is a professor of political theory at Georgetown University, he in part one, which is the bulk of the book, looks at identity politics. In part two, he looks at bipolarity and addiction.

So it's a little bit of not some themes that people would always put together. And again, some of one of the big ideas that we need to move away from identity politics into liberal competence. Probably my fault was a reader more than his as a writer was still struggling with what does he mean by that.

Having said that, what was surprising and really refreshing in this book, written by a political theory professor at Georgetown University, is it was deeply spiritual, scriptural, Christian. And I'd say the overarching argument in the book is that our racial tension is fundamentally a spiritual issue. And as it fundamentally spiritual issue, it will not be solved by political horse trading will not be solved by zero some identity identity politics.

Your side must go down for my side to go up. But it will only be solved, quote unquote, or at least improved when we look at it as an issue of sin and transgression in a lesson of forgiveness and guilt. So worth reading American awakening.

Just two more books, another book by Glenn Sunshine slaying Leviathan, limited government and resistance in the Christian tradition. At 175 pages, this was a good introduction, especially if you forgotten a lot of your western sieve or political theory. It's a good introduction to exactly what the book says, you know, where he's coming from limited government and resistance in the Christian tradition.

So he's arguing that the Christian tradition lends itself to those two things, both appropriate resistance against the government when necessary, and that government should be limited. But it's a really a work on church history going from the early church and through the Middle Ages and natural rights and the development of in the Protestant Reformation, he looks at Locke very favorably. I know there's a disagreement.

My friend Jonathan Lehman and I often talk about John Locke and he's less sanguine towards Locke's influence than than I am. The book stops at the American founder, so it would have been interesting. Okay, well, what developed after that? But again, this would be for lack of a better term would be a conservative look, but thoughtful.

So there's that book slaying Leviathan and on a completely different note. I read on vacation last week, Cal Newport's newest book. I've read Cal Newport on digital minimalism and on deep work and have listened to some of his podcast.

And I always find books like this, you know, they have certain ideas that aren't applicable or don't seem to work, but there's always some really good nuggets and especially I find Cal Newport helpful. So his newest book, A World Without Email, reimagining work in an age of communication overload. The title is a bit extravagant.

He's really not advocating for the obliteration of email or even in your own life that you couldn't be on email, but he does a really masterful job that almost all of us would resonate with in the opening chapters of describing why email feels like such a tyranny in our life. And then he argues that a lot of the things we do with putting auto replies and certain times where we're going to check our email and others. And he says they're just sort of nibbling around the edges.

And he's calling for something more drastic. He gives in the second half of the book a number of practical suggestions. Some of them were really lost on me.

They have to do with the which with plans that feel much too elaborate for me to follow. But then there's some some some real simple suggestions about email and whether you're the boss or you are work for yourself or you work for somebody else, you may not be able to implement all these right away. But I think many of us, many of you out there

would be help just even skimming some of the first chapters and last chapters and picking up a few good ideas on how you might be able to have less email in your life.

And it's actually something I've been thinking a lot about and maybe we'll talk on a podcast sometime soon. But it does seem like the you know, Cal Newport is famously he's a professor and he's a professor of computer science and yet he's famously not on social media. I don't think the two are completely at odds, but they seem to be increasingly in different spheres.

I remember somebody telling me one time there are two types of people in the world, people who read books and people who read social media. Maybe there's people who think deeply about things and people who respond to every day's news cycle. That's not fair.

We need really good thinkers to do both of those. So I'm not a Luddite and I'm not against the we need some of our best people to do that. But I've been thinking more and more and encourage you to do the same.

Think what do you want your legacy to be? And where do you want to invest your mind, your heart, your emotion, your energy? Obviously I'm podcasting so don't think it's all bad and I'm online. But in terms of my own heart and head and being moved by all of these things, I find a real resonance with Cal Newport and this book World Without E-mails No Exception. All right.

Thank you for being with us and hopefully Colin and Justin will be back next time. And until then, glory if I got, enjoy him forever and read a good book.

(buzzing)