

Handwriting On The Wall (2025): Brutality

Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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America has always been a violent nation from the very beginning, and at certain times more than others. In the earliest pioneer days, we built up a strong gun culture here because the land itself was unforgiving. The natives unfortunately were often adversarial and the competition among various settler and immigrant groups was usually contentious. Our early wars were often against our brethren. We fought among ourselves and those wars were bloody wars, very, very violent.

And then of course, after the Civil War we had a short period of time where the Wild West was calling to a lot of the young men who had been through the war and they went west. And that left an impression on our nation. In some ways it was good, but in other ways it was kill or be killed. It was the law of the gun for a short period of time, kind of playing out Darwin's idea of survival of the fittest. But, you know, that passed very quickly. Once the range began to get fenced in and lawmen came out and we settled those areas and brought, what is it, Black's Law Dictionary (or whatever it is) and started actually having a civilization out there.

But we still have inner cities that are full of mobs and mafias and gangs and a lot of crime.

But does it seem to you that even though we have this history at our back, that violence and particularly savage violence, has ratcheted up just recently? Just over the past year, maybe? Just over the past few months lately? It may be just a perception but it seems that way to me. Maybe it is that violence has become more public, with cameras and cellphones recording everything nowadays and two minutes after something happens, it is up on the Internet for everybody to see. And the news and the Internet are on 24 hour/7-day-a-week news cycle, so we hear about everything.

But what about this anecdotal evidence that I will present to you for the next few minutes? This was just a sampling of 19 days at the end of August and into early September, up to about September 10th.

—One that touched us very closely. On August 22, 2025, 23 year old Ukrainian refugee Iryna Zarutska, was fatally stabbed on a Charlotte, North Carolina light rail train on her way home from the pizzeria where she worked. That was only what, 6 miles from the house, something like that. Her murderer used a pocket knife to stab her three times in the throat in an unprovoked, racially motivated attack. Blood dripped from his knife as he moved about the train, and it poured out of poor Iryna. But no one moved to help her for over a minute and a half.

—On August 27th at Annunciation Catholic Church and school in South Minneapolis, Minnesota, a shooter opened fire through the windows of the church, killing two children and injuring 21 children and seniors. Then he killed himself. The gunman was obsessed with killing children and idolized mass murderers. He expressed hatred to many groups including Jews and Trump and all of Trump's supporters.

—And of course what shocked the nation was Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk, who was killed on the campus of Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah on September 10, 2025. He was shot in the throat from about 200 yards, and videos of the gruesome political assassination appeared on social media almost immediately. The aftermath was nonstop for it seems like two weeks. All we heard about was Charlie Kirk at Turning Point, and all that surrounded it. It was wall-to-wall coverage over here.

—Also on September 10th, I do not know if you heard about this one. This was at the Downtown Suites in Dallas, Texas. A Cuban immigrant chased and savagely attacked a 50 year old hotel manager, Chandra Nagmalaya, with a machete and decapitated him and then he kicked the severed head across the parking lot and threw it in a dumpster. And the dispute was over a broken washing machine at the hotel. All the man was doing was trying to ask this killer to not to use them.

—Again on September 10th, that is three on this one day, at Evergreen High School in suburban Denver, Colorado, a 16-year-old anti-Semitic white supremacist student opened fire with a revolver, wounding two fellow students before killing himself. Authorities say he was radicalized by an extremist network. And he was also, like the other man, fascinated with mass shooters.

Those are the anecdotes. Like I said, it was just 19 days and all of those occurred in various spots in in the US, many of them very close to where some of us live.

As of September 10th, 2025, CNN reported from the beginning of the year, 47 school shootings, with 23 on K-12 campuses and 24 on college campuses, resulting—this is a "good" statistic—in only 19 deaths but at least 77 injuries. Now I do not have time this evening to list gang-related violence, which is quite brutal, and gruesome murders perpetrated by some illegal immigrants and some not-so-illegal.

Now my list does not include the slightly earlier killing of a Democratic state lawmaker and her spouse in Minnesota and the shooting of another and his spouse, the Pennsylvania governor's residence firebombed while he and his family slept in the governor's mansion, two Israeli embassy staffers murdered after an event at a Jewish museum in Washington DC. And of course, there were two assassination attempts of President Trump during the 2024 campaign.

So I ask you, is the world becoming more brutal? And I am just talking about a few instances in the United States of America. You can go all around the world and hear and read of similar type of atrocities happening all the time.

In the Church of the Great God, we have a tradition to begin each Feast of Tabernacles with a sermon titled "The Handwriting is on the Wall." My dad began this practice in 1994, so if I have done my math right, that is 31 years ago. We have had one of these every Feast of Tabernacles since. And what he designed this particular sermon to do is to highlight a trend that illustrates

that Jesus Christ's return is right on schedule. My offering this year will highlight a very visible sign of the times. I have said this word several times already, brutality.

Let us go, if you will, to Daniel the 5th chapter. We are going to look at the background of this particular idea, that is, the handwriting on the wall. And we will read the first six verses of Daniel 5, and then we will skip down to verse 22.

Daniel 5:1-6 Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which had been in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone. In the same hour the fingers of a man's hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other.

It is quite picturesque. Let us drop down now to verse 22. This is Daniel's explanation of what had happened. Speaking to the king,

Daniel 5:22-28 "But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified. Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this

writing was written. And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word. *MENE*: God has numbered your kingdom and finished it; *TEKEL*: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; *PERES*: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and the Persians."

We have read a lot. But this is the story behind the idea of the handwriting on the wall. A literal hand wrote on the wall in Daniel's day. But these days we use the phrase metaphorically, suggesting reaching a point in which the outcome of a certain event, or a series of events—and it is usually a negative outcome—is obvious to everybody. This is going to happen. It is going to be bad. So we could say certain things like, the handwriting was on the wall for Democrats when Donald Trump overwhelmingly won the nation's swing states. Okay, that was pretty easy. If you were watching the election last November, you would have seen that these numbers come in and you would said, "oh, it's inevitable, he's going to win."

Or a little bit lighter. Once Scotty Scheffler builds just a two or three stroke lead, the handwriting is on the wall for the rest of the PGA field. That did not happen today, by the way, when we were out golfing. Not even close.

The hand that wrote on the wall was a sure sign of Babylon's defeat, and if we would go through and read what happened, it fell that very night. The Persians came in under the gate because they drained the water out of the river and got it to go another way and there was plenty of room under the river gate to just come right into the city and take it over.

Let us go to Luke the 12th chapter and we will see another phrase like this. We will read starting in verse 54, and then we will read through 56.

Luke 12:54-56 And Jesus also said to the multitudes, "When you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time?"

Now Jesus here gives us a New Testament equivalent of what happened in Daniel 5, that is, He calls it "discerning the signs of the times." He castigates the crowds, the great multitudes that were following Him, and they kind of, you could say, represent all of mankind, for being so self-absorbed and distracted that they had missed the whole point of His work and message, which He had done right before their eyes. He did all of that work and said all of those things, did all those miracles, did all those exorcisms, and they still did not get why He was there or recognize who He was.

In Matthew 16:1-3 (we will not read it), He directs His anger at the Pharisees for the same thing. The Pharisees should have known better.

So whether it was laymen or leaders, without the right perspective and ability to judge righteously, we are as good as blind. We have no idea what is coming up or why things are happening. We cannot discern what is going on, and we certainly will not discern what is coming up.

But we, those people in this room, those who are the elect of God, should be eager to avoid the example of the Pharisees and those multitudes that were following Jesus. God wants us to be aware of the world's zeitgeist. That is a word that Charles Whitaker taught us. It means "the spirit of the times." Geist is ghost, spirit, and zeit is times. So God wants us to be aware of the world's zeitgeist and thinking about the direction and ramifications of events and trends and even philosophies and ideas that are swirling about.

But the thing is, even though He wants us aware of them, He does not want us swept up and carried away by them at all. He wants us to resist being carried along in the world's wake in these matters or on these matters. Instead, He wants us to cling to Christ and His teachings, to develop His mind and to live His way. He wants us to be like a guard on guard duty, watching for the enemy to come. Heads on a swivel, light on our feet, ready to act to whatever dangers may come. He does not want us asleep at the switch and He does not want us following the false leads that may come up and trick us.

Let us go to II Timothy 3. Now we are going to get into the guts of this idea of brutality. We will read the first five verses here. I, in particular in my handwriting on the wall sermons, have been using this as kind of my

template, picking one of these attitudes out for each Feast. But that is what Paul says here as we read.

II Timothy 3:1-5 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come [and then he tells us what people will be like in this time]: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away.

Last year we zeroed in on the characteristic having "a form or appearance of godliness but denying its power" in verse 5, highlighting the recent trend of what I call cultural Christianity. In 2023, we covered the attribute "unloving" in verse 3, better translated "as without natural affection" or "without family affection." Tonight, our focus will be on another evil attribute listed in verse 3, "brutal."

What is brutal? Let us define our terms here. In English, the word's synonyms are savagery, barbarism, viciousness, cruelty, bloodthirstiness, and inhumane violence. I think you probably knew that. It is pretty easy. In Greek the word under brutal is *anémeros*. It is *Strong's* #434 if you want to look it up. It probably will not do you any good. It is a hapax legomenon, which is another word that Charles Whittaker taught us. It means that it only occurs once. But it also means savage, fierce, ferocious, unmerciful. It has a very interesting sense though. It has the sense of feral, like a feral cat; wild, untamed, like a beast, with the connotation of being menacing and threatening and dangerous and even having an evil, predatory intent.

Now the Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo, uses this word to identify the opposite of *phileo* love. You know, *phileo* is the love we would give to, let us say, a friend, a very close friend. As such, as the opposite of *phileo*, brutal or *anémeros*, is the *outward expression of extreme hatred toward those who are considered enemies*. So if you get on somebody's bad list and they are of this brutal temperament, they are going to take it to the extreme. And that hatred produces savage violence that goes beyond the pale of even normal violence between enemies. This is the stuff of things that slide into the

territory of war crimes, inhumane torture, and other inhumane abhorrent acts of evil.

Note the word *inhumane* because it is very essential to both sides of this subject. The perpetrator is on the one side, the brutal person, and the victim that he expresses his hate upon. The brutal person behaves like a wild beast, seemingly out of some sort of emotional instinct, we could maybe call it the "law of the jungle," rather than out of any kind of reason. On the other side, the perpetrator dehumanizes the victim.

Understand this. The perpetrator himself acts like a wild beast, inhumane in himself, but he has to make his victim not human in his own mind. So what he does is he reduces him or her to something lesser, something beneath him, something that he considers contemptible, something he could really hate with all his being. This is why we hear of such brutal murderers calling their victims abusive names like Nazi. We hear that all the time because most everybody in the Western world considers Nazis to be other. But other bad, really bad. They are not even human, they are monsters, right? So they call them a name like this.

This is usually used in a political type of hatred. But it can be more personal. It could be like a crazed man who does a brutal murder against a woman and he calls her a whore. He has to dehumanize her. Or the murderer calls the person a pig or filth or a Jew because we know how people feel about Jews. And so on. And they will come up with some name for their victim that makes the victim like a worm, a bug, something that needs to be exterminated. They must degrade their victims to make themselves feel superior. And by doing this, they justify their abhorrent crimes against them in their own minds. They deserved it. They were not worthy. I am doing society a favor by getting rid of this abhorrent person. They think of it like taking out the trash.

Now let us look back into II Timothy 3, verse 3 and look at the two words that flank brutal. "Without self-control" is the one that comes first, and then after it, "despisers of good." And both of these feed into the brutality. The first, without self-control, points out that such people cannot govern their emotions. They cannot govern their passions. They just act on what they feel at any given time. They lack restraint. They have nothing inside them that

will stop them from doing what they are thinking of doing. And so they just do it. At some point, their reason and even their drive to preserve their own lives becomes overwhelmed by their emotions and they act irrationally, fanatically, like a predatory beast following its urges to kill. And sometimes, if they live after committing their crimes, they will admit to the police that they could not stop themselves. It is like something else took over and they acted. They did what they were thinking about. And this is why I think many of them commit suicide, because at some point they wake up from this attitude, this brutal attitude, and they suddenly realized with a more rational mind what they have done and they cannot live with it. Of course there is also police shooting back at them.

The second trait, the one that comes after brutal, is "despisers of good." And this is the word *aphilagathos*, *Strong's* #865. It literally means not loving good. The A at the beginning of this word is a negative. *Phila* is love, and *agathos* is good. This word has a connection with our phrase, "the common good," or even "the greater good." It is not necessarily speaking of godly goodness, but more generally what is good for people, what is good for society, what is good for living together in a community.

In other words, these brutal people have no interest in the public welfare, not at all. Even though they may make these great manifestos, how they are doing these acts for the good of society, it is a lie. It is a self-deception. They are not pursuing what makes society possible, tolerable, and enjoyable. They do what they do purely because they feel a deep personal uncontrollable animus toward their victims, for whatever reason, and oftentimes the reason does not make any sense—because they do not make any sense. It is just overflowing emotion and hatred that comes out of them.

So they have this deep personal uncontrollable animus toward their victims or beyond that, to the whole group of people, that is, that the victim comes from, or even what they believe maybe with no proof whatsoever that their victims represent something. It is just this person is suddenly abhorrent to them. And it is not even this person. Sometimes it is a lot of innocent people. Like in Minneapolis, they were at a Catholic church and school and that is all it took. He did not care who was inside. He wanted to shoot it up because he had this animus for some reason toward children. And probably toward the Catholic Church as well. I think he had been a student there. And you know,

it just does not make any sense. And the survivors have to live with something senseless like that.

Let us go to Act 7 because brutality appears in scripture several times. I just want this one. This is the act of brutality that was committed upon Stephen. We will read verses 51 through 60. We are starting here in the middle of what Stephen said to the Jews at this point.

Acts 7:51-55 "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." [I mean, he was all barrels firing at this point and they deserved it because it was all true.] When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart [That phrase is an emotional response. It hit them right there. And they acted out of totally irrational minds, totally upon their emotions.], and they gnashed at him with their teeth. But he, . . .

I mean, even that description shows that they had gone from people listening to somebody speak to wild beasts. They were animals at this point. That is what animals do. If you see the wolves in, let us say, a western, and what are they doing? They are going [**snarling, growling** sound]. But they snarl and they gnash their teeth at the cowboy who is in distress or whatever. Well, that is how these Jews were acting.

Acts 7:55-60 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and

saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Like I said, this is just one of several instances of brutality in the Scripture. Jesus' crucifixion was certainly one of them as well. However, the point here, and in Christ's murder as well, is that the brutality was perpetrated by a group, not a singular individual. And perhaps even more importantly to us as we come upon the end time, get deeper into the time that seems to be coming on, that is, that this murder of Steven was instigated or perpetrated by a governing body. The Sanhedrin. That is where he was speaking. He was speaking to the Sanhedrin. You can look at that in chapter 6, verse 12. I will not read it. And it was presided over by an influential leader. As a matter of fact, the most influential leader among the Jews, the high priest. You can see that in chapter 7, verse 1.

So the brutal slaying of Stephen was what we would call state sanctioned at the highest levels of the government—and considered a spiritual necessity. It was a righteous act to them. If highly religious people did this then, their counterparts can do it now. Now right now, the political left is producing the most brutal murders at this point. But the same kind of heinous murder could spring from the right, even the religious right. I am sure that the Jews were considered very conservative, very rightist at in their time. And as my dad used to say, they thought Jesus was a flaming liberal.

But Jeremiah 17:9 says what? It says, and we cannot forget it: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" We cannot trust in either side of the political spectrum to treat us nicely if for some reason we cross them.

Paul's prophecy in II Timothy 3 simply says, men will be this way, meaning humankind, not just men versus women. He is talking about everybody will start showing these kinds of traits. He does not say, only people on the left. He does not say only people on the right. He says people, men. It is people in general, all sides.

If you will turn back a few chapters to John 16, we will read the first four verses here. This is Jesus' admonition, among the final instructions to His disciples, and we have to heed what He says here.

John 16:1-4 "These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble. They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God's service. And these things they will do to you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them. And these things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you."

Now we have Him in us. We have angels protecting us and they are not going to go away. But we have to understand the spirit of the times. We have to understand what is going on in the world. We have to understand that people will become more brutal as the end nears. Satan and his minions will be most eager to entrap God's elect in such situations, just as the Jews were to entrap Stephen in that situation. They will not hold back their hatred and brutality. And they certainly will not hold back those who are working with them.

But you know what? We know the Father and the Son. And we know what we have been taught. We know that He will be with us, and we know, as He said in other places, that He will give us what to say and help us to act the part of what He wants us to witness. We do not need to worry about that.

So, my advice is, heed the signs of the times. Grow in your relationship with Christ. Prepare for the Kingdom of God. And trust in God to keep you safe during those tumultuous times that are just ahead.