

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 11-8-15 PM NOTES
"HERE WE STAND ON RACISM"
VARIOUS SCRIPTURES
#10 in Series, "Here We Stand"

Racism "The deeply held belief that one's ethnicity or cultural heritage justifies a sense of superiority over those of other backgrounds, resulting in discrimination, segregation, or unjust treatment toward them." □Mark Tatlock

Ephesians 2:11-12 (ESV) "11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time **separated** from Christ, **alienated** from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having **no hope** and **without God** in the world."

Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV) "19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

Ephesians 2:13 (ESV) "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Ephesians 2:14 (ESV) "For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility."

Ephesians 2:16 (ESV) "and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."

Ephesians 2:18 (ESV) "For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father."

1 Corinthians 9:24 (ESV) "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it."

I. The Origin of People Groups

Scientists have found that if you take any 2 people from anywhere in the world, the genetic differences in them are about 0.2% even if they are from the same people group. The so-called racial differences (skin color, eye shape, nose shape, etc) account for only 6% of this 0.2% variation. That means that the so called racial characteristics amount to just 0.012% difference genetically from other people groups.

□Compiled from Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race, One Blood*, pp. 112-113

Genesis 3:20 (ESV) "The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

Ham means dark or burnt. *Shem* means brownish or dusky. *Japheth* means fair or light.

II. The Equality of All People Groups

Acts 17:26 (ESV) "And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place."

Acts 10:34-35 (ESV) “³⁴ So Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’”

2 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV) “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

III. The False Justifications for Racism

A. Evolution

“... some of the wildest tribes in southern Asia and eastern Africa have no trace whatsoever of the first foundations of all human civilization, of family life, and marriage. They live together in herds, like apes, generally climbing on trees and eating fruits; they do not know of fire, and use stones and clubs as weapons, just like the higher apes...At the lowest stage of human mental development are the Australians, some tribes of the Polynesians, and the Bushmen, Hottentots, and some of the Negro tribes.”
Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919)

B. The “Curse on Ham”

Genesis 9:25 (HCSB) “Canaan will be cursed. He will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers.”

IV. The Response of the Church

“Are our churches thermometers registering the racial attitudes and actions of the world; or are they thermostats raising the warmth of commitment to racial understanding and love and demonstrable harmony?”
John Piper

A. Repent of Racism

B. For Those Who Have Been the Recipients of Racism, Forgive

C. Confront in Love Racism Among Other Believers

Galatians 2:13-14 (ESV) “¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?’”

D. Pray for Our Church to Be More Ethnically Diverse

Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV) “⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’”

First Baptist Church Powell
Sermon 10: Here We Stand On Racism
Series: Here We Stand
Various Scriptures

Most all of us over sixty years old have personal memories of seeing racism openly displayed. If your ethnicity is other than Caucasian, you may be well under sixty years old, and are currently experiencing racism. One of our African American members told me of attending a predominantly white church several times and when he would sit down, people on the same pew would get up and move to another place. That was shared with me in the context of his being accepted here.

One of my sons was surprised when I told him that in my freshman class at the University of Tennessee in 1967 was the first black scholarship football player ever allowed to play for the UT football team (Lester McClain). In recent days my heart broke as an older pastor friend (an African American) told of having a sick child, and being turned away from a hospital because of the color of the child's skin. Does the Bible have anything to say about race and racism? It certainly does!

Let's define racism. Racism- "The deeply held belief that one's ethnicity or cultural heritage justifies a sense of superiority over those of other backgrounds, resulting in discrimination, segregation, or unjust treatment toward them." [Mark Tatlock, *Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong*, page 159]. Racism is unrighteous whether it involves whites, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians, or whatever ethnic group you can name.

Let's look at Ephesians 2:11-22. This passage has many principles and applications to racism whatever groups we are talking about. The specific groups in this passage were Jews and Gentiles (all non-Jews), but the principles apply to all ethnic or people groups where there is separation and alienation. When we read Ephesians 2:11-12, we see a horrible separation between Jews and Gentiles. Ephesians 2:11-12 (ESV):

Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called 'the uncircumcision' by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Some key words and phrases are "separated", "alienated", "no hope", and "without God". This divide was racial, social, and cultural. Now look at Ephesians 2:19-22 (ESV):

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

What a transformation! What happened between Ephesians 2:11-12 and Verses 19-22? We see what happened in Ephesians 2:13 (ESV): "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." The blood of Christ was shed! There was a cross; there was a substitutionary death! Now verse 14 says there is peace, there is unity because the walls of separation have been torn down in Christ. Ephesians 2:14 (ESV): "For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility".

In verse 16 we read that the two groups are reconciled to God and now are in one body—the Body of Christ. Ephesians 2:16 (ESV): "...and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby *killing the hostility*." Verse 18 tells us that both groups now have the same Holy Spirit indwelling them, and both have access to the same Heavenly Father. Ephesians 2:18 (ESV) says: "For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father." The cross not only dealt with the barrier between the Jew

and God, and the Gentile and God; the cross dealt with the barrier between Jew and Gentile. By implication, this passage applies to every people group and every ethnic group where there is separation. Christ reconciles us to God and also to one another.

Sometimes pastors are criticized for preaching on subjects like this because we are told it is a social issue, and it has no place in the pulpit. Verse 13 tells me that it isn't primarily a social issue; it is a blood of Christ issue! The results of the blood of Christ applied to a life belongs in every pulpit!

There is a very unbiblical concept that many people in our culture have of *races*, and they don't realize that the concept of races today is grounded in Darwinian evolution. There is only one race— the human race! The only races in the Bible are the spiritual ones we run. God created only one race— the human race, and He imbedded in the human race alone (every people group, every tribe, every language) His image. Because of the image of God in all human beings, there is an inherent dignity and worth in all mankind. Where the problem lies today and where it has always lain is not between *races*, but it is between ethnic or people groups within the one human race. In the remainder of this message, I am going to refer to what is commonly called *races* as *ethnic groups* or *people groups*.

I. The Origin of People Groups

If the various people groups didn't evolve as Darwin taught, then how do we have all the people groups today with all their diversity in skin color, cultures, languages, and facial features, etc? First of all, let's settle the fact that there aren't really any major *physical* differences between the world's people groups. The obvious ones such as skin color and eye shape are really minor when compared to the areas in which the world's people groups are alike.

Scientists have found that if you take any two people from anywhere in the world, the genetic differences in them are about 0.2% even if they are from the same people group. The so-called racial differences (skin color, eye shape, nose shape, etc) account for only 6% of this 0.2% variation. That means that the so called racial characteristics amount to just 0.012% difference genetically from other people groups. [Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race, One Blood*, Pages 112-113]. The so called racial differences in physical appearance are trivial. *Race* is not an issue when it comes to a tissue match for a transplant or what blood a person can receive in a transfusion. Minor as they are, what is the origin of the people groups with distinctions in skin color and physical features? Let's examine Scripture.

When God created the human race, He didn't make a batch of people; He made two people— Adam from the dirt and Eve from Adam (but with different genes). The entire human race came from these two. Genesis 3:20 (ESV): "The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living." With all we have learned about genetics in this generation, we now know that God could have put within their gene pool the capacity to have descendants of different skin colors and physical characteristics.

After several generations of their descendants intermarrying with one another, there is the possibility for all the variations we see today. Let's fast forward to the time of Noah. All people groups today came from the three sons of Noah. We get a hint about their physical characteristics from their names. *Ham* means dark or burnt. *Shem* means brownish or dusky. *Japheth* means fair or light. All of this diversity was pleasing to God because He put the capacity for this in Adam and Eve when He created them.

After the Tower of Babel incident recorded in Genesis 11 where God confused the languages (which gives us the basis for the basic languages today), the descendants of Ham settled in Africa. The descendants of Shem settled in the Middle East and Asia, and the descendants of Japheth settled in Europe. Through the intermarriage of the descendants of Noah's sons, we have the unique physical characteristics, traits, cultures, and identities of people groups today. The variety in the human race that we see today isn't about evolution; it is about genetics. The more we learn about genetics, the more we progressively see a scientific description of how everything happened just like the Bible said it did. For the question as to how the people groups (*races*) that we have today developed, there is a one word answer— *God*. The diversity of the different people groups was planned by God in His perfect will.

II. The Equality of People Groups

A key verse relating to the abolishing of racism is Acts 17:26 (ESV): “And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.” We all have a common origin in one man, “one blood” (NKJV). Therefore, no people or ethnic group is superior or more highly developed than any other people group. When God instructed the apostle Peter to go with the gospel to the Roman Gentile, Cornelius, we read in Acts 10:34-35 (ESV), “So Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.’” Someone who doesn’t carefully divide the Word of Truth might see a contradiction of the equality of all people groups with all the Old Testament prohibitions about the Jews being separate from the Gentiles, and not intermarrying with Gentiles. Many of the Jews did wrongly interpret these commands as evidence that they were superior to the Gentiles.

In reality, Israel’s separation was to maintain their distinctives so that they could be a light to the Gentiles. The separation was from the false gods of the Gentiles. Any Gentile, whatever their ethnic background, could become a follower of the one true God the Jews worshipped. Some examples are Rahab, Ruth, Naaman, and probably Nebuchadnezzar. In other words, the separation was for spiritual purity, not racial purity.

In the Old Testament, interracial marriage was forbidden not on the basis of ethnicity, but on the basis of idolatry. God knew that if they married foreign wives, they would adopt their gods. Exhibit A is King Solomon. The Israelites were not to marry an unbeliever, and that same prohibition is still in place for believers in Christ today. Marriage is not forbidden on the basis of people group or ethnicity, but on the basis of relationship with Christ. 2 Corinthians 6:14 (ESV): “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

III. The False Justifications for Racism

Let’s be clear that all racism is sin. It is the opposite of love, which is to characterize our lives. Racism has always been around, but in recent history there have been primarily two ways people have rationalized blatant racism that, at times, in many countries (sadly including the United States of America) resulted even in slavery.

A. Evolution

Darwinian evolution taught that the different people groups (races) evolved separately and at different rates, and, therefore, some were more highly developed than others. In other words, some *races* are more fully human than others. This was the thinking of Hitler that led him to seek to destroy the Jews and establish a “master race”.

A prominent evolutionist was Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919). He is the one who originated the phony diagrams that showed a baby going through the stages of evolution in its development in the womb. Here is what he wrote in *The History of Creation* that was studied in universities in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Haeckel said:

Some of the wildest tribes in southern Asia and eastern Africa have no trace whatsoever of the first foundations of all human civilization, of family life, and marriage. They live together in herds, like apes, generally climbing on trees and eating fruits; they do not know of fire, and use stones and clubs as weapons, just like the higher apes... At the lowest stage of human mental development are the Australians, some tribes of the Polynesians, and the Bushmen, Hottentots, and some of the Negro tribes. [Quoted in Ken Ham, “One Blood”, Pages 79-80].

Even into the 1900's, Australian Aborigines were considered the *missing link*, and not fully human. Aborigines were hunted like animals, shot, and stuffed like a lion or tiger for museums so that those more highly developed *races* could view and study them. In the early 1900's, an African Pygmy was put on display in an American zoo as an example of "an inferior race" [Ham, page 125 and following]. As a side note, today some medical professionals, who in many areas, are dedicated to the saving of life will kill unborn human beings, who like the Aborigines of a century ago, are considered *not yet fully human*. Will abortion be seen in future generations like we now see the killing of the Aborigines?

B. The "Curse on Ham"

In the Bible there was no curse put on Ham. It was on his son Canaan. This butchering of biblical interpretation was used as an excuse for slavery in early America, and horribly is still being taught in some circles to justify racism against black people. This false view goes back to Genesis 9:20-25. After the flood, Noah grew a vineyard, harvested the grapes, made wine, and drank too much. He went to sleep and left his body uncovered. His son, Ham, came in and saw his father, and the text implies spoke disrespectfully of his father to his two brothers. His brothers, Shem and Japheth, covered their father's body in a respectful way. When Noah found out about it, he pronounced a curse on Ham's son Canaan. Disrespect for parents was treated very seriously in the Old Testament.

As to why a curse was put on Ham's son, instead of Ham himself, we cannot ascertain with certainty. Perhaps it was because God was punishing Ham for dishonoring his father by having a son who would dishonor him. Here is how this whole incident has been, and still is being used to justify racism, and the most heinous form of racism, which is slavery. The false logic goes something like this. Since Ham is the father of the entire black *race*, God cursed him. Genesis 9:25 (HCSB): "Canaan will be cursed. He will be the lowest of slaves to his brothers". Many interpret this verse that slavery is justified. Slave owners are just carrying out God's curse. I am embarrassed to even have to deal with such a horrible interpretation of a text!

First, Ham had four sons and only Canaan was cursed. There is no "curse of Ham". The descendants of Canaan were the Canaanites. They became an unspeakably evil people; God commanded the Israelites under the leadership of Joshua (when they went into the land of Canaan) to destroy them. The bottom line on the reason for racism is human pride that manifests itself in one group of human beings, in God's image, thinking they are superior to another group of human beings in God's image. Racism is sin.

IV. The Response of the Church

Since racism is not a *skin* problem but a *sin* problem, there is a solution. Jesus died that we might be saved from our sins including the sin of racism. As long as we classify it as a social problem, it won't be fixed. The government can pass laws forbidding discrimination (and they should), but that doesn't cure racism; it just drives it underground to be expressed in more subtle ways. The solution lies within the church in the proclamation of the gospel that delivers sinners from their sin. It is as the church proclaims boldly the Scriptures that racism will begin to fall, one person at a time.

John Piper asks a probing question of the church: "Are our churches thermometers registering the racial attitudes and actions of the world; or are they thermostats raising the warmth of commitment to racial understanding and love and demonstrable harmony?" [John Piper, "Brothers, We Are Not Professionals", Page 197] Let me close out this message with some practical application.

A. Repent of Racism

If racism is a sin and we are guilty of it, then our first response is to repent of this sin. It may have been *mild* racism, but there is no mild sin! Is it telling derogatory racial jokes or using a racial slur? Repent!

B. For Those Who Have Been the Recipient of Racism, Forgive

A bitter and angry spirit robs you of the joy of the Lord. Bitterness (unforgiveness) is the only sin that puts the person who has been harmed in jail, and lets the offender go free. As an act of the will enabled by God's grace, forgive.

C. Confront in Love Racism among Believers

There is a biblical precedence here. We have recorded in God's Word a case where Paul confronted Peter over his sin in this area. In Galatians 2, Peter came to Antioch to spend some time with the Gentile believers. He hung out with them, perhaps eating ham sandwiches, until some Jews came from Jerusalem. When the Jews from James in Jerusalem came, Peter separated himself from the Gentiles. His example led others Jewish believers like Barnabas to do the same thing. Galatians 2:13-14 (ESV):

And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Peter was rejecting and excluding some because they were not ethnic Jews. What would happen in the church if every time another professing believer told a racial joke, made a slur, or rejected another person because of their people group, another brother or sister confronted them in love?

D. Pray for Our Church to Be More Ethnically Diverse

A church should be a little colony of heaven in this evil world. We get a glimpse into heaven in Revelation 7:9-10 (ESV):

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Conclusion

Diversity in people groups seem to be permanent. John in His vision of heaven could tell by observing that those around the throne were from every different people group. I believe that what it looks like before the throne of God above is what it should look like in the church here below. The blood of Christ has not only cleansed us; it has reconciled us to every other people group.