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### **Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part IV**

**Ephesians 2:11-22**

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**February 8, 2015**

Please turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians 2. We'll be reading Verses 11-22 as a point of departure really. This is, as I said earlier, a topical message. We seek to unleash the power of the truth, to be those who are sowing the light of the Gospel in the midst of a dark world. Today, 'Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part IV – Racism' will be the title of the message.

It's really something to ponder, the way that our society in America in the last few years has become. We certainly struggle with race throughout our whole history, no question about that, and something to see, these most recent eruptions. You know, when I mention the names, or the place—Ferguson, Missouri, it creates for anyone in America certain emotions to rise to the surface, or feelings, anxieties, thoughts, frustrations. The name Michael Brown, the young man who was shot to death. Or Darren Wilson, the police officer, the white police officer who shot the young black man, Michael Brown. Or the name Eric Garner, New York City Police Department, a white officer put him in a chokehold, and this black man subsequently died from some complications that resulted. Just a few years ago, the names Trayvon Martin, George Zimmerman.

In our American culture, we see escalating racial tensions, and seemingly deepening divisions, an emotionally charged environment that our leaders seem to seek to exploit rather than to build bridges. When you look at these things, you know, I was born in 1964 myself, and so my perspective is limited. All of us are limited by our birth, and the place that we were born, and our experiences, but for me, in growing up in Atlanta, in the south, I went to school, by the time I went to school, Brown vs. the Board of Education, the decision made in 1954 that the southern states resisted implementing, which then led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. All of those things were really on the books, and being practiced, and when I went to school, the schools were integrated. And my family, I grew up in a family that didn't talk about, racism wasn't a part of our fabric. In fact, my parents had left one Baptist church over the fact that my dad became aware they had hindered a black person from coming into the church in the late 60's, and so that was enough for my mom and dad to leave that church. So all I knew was that kind of thing, and I played ball with white kids, and black kids. We

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didn't have any Hispanic kids at that time, on the ball team. Now the area has just really become more and more diverse.

I had the opportunity to be a chaplain for the Duluth High School football team. I played at Duluth High School, Patti was a cheerleader, I played football. This wasn't in my notes, Honey. Sorry about that. But then later, when I came back to the area to be a pastor, they asked me to be the chaplain. I got to serve as chaplain for three years, and I saw the amazing diversity that had happened. Asian kids, and Hispanic kids on the team, but you know, even then, one of the things that really broke my heart as I saw that, was they were more segregated around the training table than we were. The training table, the place you eat, you know I would go talk to them as they were eating their meal. In the late 70's and early 80's, we didn't worry about sitting apart because of race, we sat down and we talked, and it was really an interesting thing to see that. And then Duluth High School, like I said, in the mid-90's the late 90's. It was different.

So in some ways we take steps back and we take steps forward. We talk about all these things, and we see what is happening. And I'm reminded of the words of another person who was at the center of a time of great racial tension, and what he said. Remember Rodney King, who was brutally beaten by the Los Angeles Police Department, several officers? I watched that video again recently. I saw it way back, and it was one that was caught by someone with a camcorder, minutes of them beating him with a stick after he's down. I'm not trying to try all of the issues related to that, but certainly that was something that ignited passions when he was beaten in March of 1991. In April, late April 1992, all of the police officers' charges were dropped against them, and it set off the race riots in LA. Fifty-three people died in those race riots. Two thousand people were injured. You see the video of Rodney King, and you wonder, "How could these police officers," though they had the adrenaline pumping from after a high-speed chase, "How could they do that? Keep hitting the man?"

You may also remember the video taken from the helicopter there in Los Angeles, where four black men pulled out a truck driver, I forget his name, a white truck driver, and beat him almost to death. He just happened to be in wrong place, at the wrong time, with the wrong color of skin. You see these things, and you wonder, as Rodney King said shortly after that, he tried to be an agent of peace when he, the man who had suffered this way, and this injustice, said, "Can we all get along?" That really is the question—*Can we all get along?*

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You know, the Bible has a lot to say about this issue. It is necessary for life and godliness in the Scripture. Christians are to be people in situations like this who are able to answer the questions of the day with the wisdom of God. It is in the love of God to speak the truth in love.

I was really blessed by, I found online some time back, a month or two ago actually, a statement by a football player for the New Orleans Saints. Some of you may have seen it, Ben Watson, the tight end for the New Orleans Saints, wrote a blog after he was playing on Monday Night Football, and he heard right before the game about the decision of the Ferguson grand jury to not press charges against Darren Wilson. And so he writes as a 30 some odd year-old black man. He actually played at the University of Georgia by the way too, but as a Christian. I want to read his statement because it captures so many of the different feelings that you have in times like this, but then it brings things back to the main point. Listen to what he says:

*After I tried to figure out how I felt, I decided to write it down. Here are my thoughts.*

It was picked up by liberal websites. It was picked up by, I think he was on *Good Morning America* at least, maybe another one of the morning shows. The people picked it up and said, “Here is a man speaking with, he was breathing grace in the midst of a tense circumstance.” People recognized the beauty of that. Listen to what he said:

*I decided to write down my thoughts. I’m angry because the stories of injustice that have been passed down for generations seem to be continuing before my eyes. I’m frustrated because pop culture, music, and movies glorify these types of police/citizen altercations, and promote an invincible attitude that continues to get young men killed in real life, away from the safety of movie sets, and music studios.*

*I’m fearful because in the back of my mind, I know that though I’m a law-abiding citizen, I can still be looked upon as a threat to those who don’t know me. So I will continue to have to go the extra mile to earn the benefit of the doubt.*

*I’m embarrassed because the looting, violent protests, and law-breaking only confirm, and in the minds of many, validate the stereotypes, and thus the inferior treatment.*

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*I'm sad because another young man lost his life. His family is suffering. The racial divide has widened. A community is in shambles. Accusations, insensitivity, hurt, and hatred are boiling over, and we may never know the truth about what happened that day.*

*I'm sympathetic because I wasn't there, so I don't know exactly what happened. Maybe Darren Wilson acted within his rights and duty as an officer of the law, and killed Michael Brown in self-defense, like any of us would have done in the circumstance. Now he has to fear the backlash against himself and his loved ones when he was only doing his job. What a horrible thing to endure. Or, maybe he provoked Michael Brown, and ignited the series of events that led him to eventually murdering the young man to prove a point.*

*I'm offended because of the insulting comments I've seen, that are not only insensitive, but dismissive to the painful experience of others.*

*I'm confused because I don't know why it is so hard to obey a policeman. You will not win. And I don't know why some policemen abuse their power. Power is a responsibility, not a weapon to brandish and to lord over the populous.*

*I'm introspective because sometimes I want to take our side, without looking at the facts in situations like these. Sometimes I feel like it is us against them. Sometimes I'm just as prejudiced as people I point fingers at, and that is not right. How can I look at white skin and make assumptions, but not want assumptions made about me. That's not right.*

*I'm hopeless because I've lived long enough to expect things like this to continue to happen. I'm not surprised, and at some point my little children are going to inherit the weight of being a minority, and all that entails.*

*I'm hopeful because I know that while we still have race issues in America, we enjoy today a much different normal than that of our parents, and grandparents. I see it in my relationships with teammates, friends, and mentors, and it is a beautiful thing.*

*I'm encouraged ultimately because the problem is not a skin problem, it is a sin problem. Sin is the reason we rebel against authority. Sin is the reason we abuse our authority. Sin is the reason we are racist, prejudiced, and lie to cover for our own. Sin is the reason we riot, loot, and burn, but I'm encouraged because God*

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*has provided a solution for sin through His Son Jesus, and with it a transformed heart and mind, one that is capable of looking past the outward, and seeing what is truly important in every human being. The cure for the Michael Brown, the Trayvon Martin, the Tamir Rice, and Eric Garner tragedies is not education, or exposure, it is the Gospel. So I'm encouraged because the Gospel gives mankind hope.*

What a powerful statement! What you just heard is a man who loves Christ, has had a changed heart, and who thinks biblically, even as he wrestles with the various perspectives. Each of those situations we talked about, a lot of complexity, and yet to be able to navigate and look at those things, and to speak redemptively into that, that is what God has called us to be able to do. And it is about the Gospel, it is the Gospel that deals with our divisions because it is the Gospel that deals with our enmity, our hatred, our hostility, and our hostility that is rooted horizontally is the inevitable. It is the inevitable outcome of hostility vertically. When you are not right with God, you cannot be right with people. You may think you are, and there are varying levels. I mean, we love our own, as unbelievers, birds of a feather flock together. We have our families we care about more, but in reality, even in the best relationship, two unbelievers are not really at peace because they are two people. If they are unbelievers that are trying to be their own God, there is no room for someone else in my world when I'm trying to be my own God. But when God has done everything necessary to make us right with Himself, He also makes us right with one another, and that is the beauty of what Jesus prayed about in John 17, and what Paul is talking about here in this passage I want to read, Ephesians 2:11-22.

***Ephesians 2:11-22 ~ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY,***



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***AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.***

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

*Our Father, we ask right now, by Your grace, that the meditations of our hearts, and the words that You've given to me would be acceptable in Your sight, oh Lord, our strength, and our Redeemer. May You build up Your body, may You lift up the glory of the salvation that You have given to us in Jesus Christ. And we pray this in His name, Amen.*

'Unleashing the Power of the Truth', you know, how do we speak to others in this situation? How do you speak to an acquaintance, or a friend who is struggling with racism, unbiblical prejudice against others, resentments, hatred? The same way that we do, basically, every other issue that we've dealt with. We are to, first of all, try to *Create a Context for the Truth*, our outline is the same as the last three weeks. *Create a Context for the Truth* and then *Speak the Truth*.

### 1) Create a Context for the Truth:

We need to try to create a context for the truth, and we've said that basically truth is always communicated in the context of a relationship. Then we are to seek to not just speak the truth, in something kind of like throwing a grenade at someone, a truth grenade. We are to try to build a bridge and connect with that person so that we can speak to them in the context of a love relationship. That is how God speaks to us, and that is how we are to speak to one another.

So we've said that the first thing we should do when we have the opportunity to talk with someone is pray. Ask the Lord to help this opportunity be used for Him, by His grace, and for His glory. Then we've said that we need to put off pride, and put on humility, and we need to do that in this situation as well.

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You know one of the things that I know that I probably struggle with actually, as I mentioned earlier, I grew up after a lot of the changes had been made, and certainly seen so much that is still not right, but it is easy for me when I look at old footage. I was watching, we were watching a PBS special around the Martin Luther King holiday on the march from Selma to Montgomery. And watching that PBS special, and hearing about the different challenges in Alabama, and the south, Atlanta, particularly Birmingham. They showed some footage of the Chief of Police, and his actions in stopping some peaceful protests that were going on, and the way that he spoke, it was a combination of arrogance and ignorance. It was embarrassing! “You were the Chief of Police in 1964, in Birmingham, Alabama, you’ve got to be kidding me!” That’s how I felt. “How can you be so ignorant?” Well, one of the things we have to do is put off pride is to realize, “Wait a minute, but for the grace of God, I would be that man.” That’s the reality. The picture the Bible gives, if the Lord were to change places with me and that person, and allow me to grow up in their circumstances, and experience all the challenges they’ve experienced, apart from His grace, there but for His grace go I. So we have no pride over anyone else.

Even the person that is doing the most offensive act in a situation like that, the person in power, we are not to stand in the sense of judging them from our hearts. We can critically say what you are doing is wrong, but that is not judging down, that is speaking the truth. “What you’re doing is wrong. What you’re doing is against the word of God. What you are doing is dishonoring God, and dishonoring a person made in the image of God.” We can say those things, we can say them firmly, but there ought to even be in those words a sense of love beckoning that person to repent. It is not judging them and looking down on them. It is hard for us to look back and think, and to really to look back at situations. We can be actually *‘chronological bigots’*. That is a phrase that C.S. Lewis used. He actually uses a little different context. He talked about how *‘chronological snobbery’*, I think is what he called it actually. It sounds a little more English, doesn’t it? Chronological snobbery, not bigotry.

What he was saying then was that we should read the old writings, and the literature of previous days, and not think that we have it all figured out today, and they don’t have anything to offer us. That is chronological snobbery, Lewis said. We ought to put ourselves in their circumstances, listen to what they have to say, and when you do read things from previous periods of church history, or previous periods of just literature, you find things that are really great insights for today. “Hey, we are missing out on this,” and then you find other things and you think, “Well how did they miss this other thing? What were they thinking?” Well, if you

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put yourself in their place, in their circumstance, how could you so critically judge? Because if they were looking at us right now, they'd say, "What are you guys thinking? 21<sup>st</sup> Century America, you all are nuts!" Because they would see things that we don't see. So we need to put off pride, and put on humility. "What do I have that I haven't received? I have no business sinfully judging any other human being. That is God's place. I can speak the truth, but speak the truth in love. Speak it boldly, yes, but speak it in love."

Pray, put off pride, put on humility, secondly, this is *Creating a Context for the Truth*. Thirdly, put off selfishness, put on love. One of the great challenges in every relationship is to try to put others interests above our own. When you are having a conversation that is difficult, one of the things that we really need to labor at is, "Put myself in the other person's shoes. Lord, help me to think about this from their perspective. Even though I can't fully understand, 'Well, how can you do that?'" Well, one thing is you can ask them questions and listen. "Tell me how you feel about this? Tell me why you feel this way. I want to understand." That in itself is speaking love. "I care about you and your perspective. I'm not just ready to spar over ideas. I'm here to understand, to talk, and then to share with you the hope that I found in Christ."

A principle that we need to operate in this putting off self-interest and putting on love is—be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, words in James 1. One of the things I think that is interesting, an interesting dynamic in our day, I was reading some blogs this week related to different, I forget which story I was reading about. One of the ones in the last year, either the Garner situation, or the Michael Brown situation. You know, you read a story and there will be responses below it? I read a number of them, and one of the responses was by one of the respondents, "If Michael Brown had been a white man, or if Eric Garner had been a white man, no one would care." You know, I thought that was actually probably true, but why is that?

It is politically incorrect today to talk about the struggles of white people. It is politically correct to talk about the struggles of minorities. So in that sense, this person was stating a reality, and as I thought about that, I thought, "You know, that really is true. I think that is true, but what a neat opportunity for us, who are white, to understand just a little bit of what it has been like to be a minority, to be black in this culture, or to be a minority in any other culture, to be the disenfranchised." We have an opportunity, finally, to feel what they feel a little bit. We ought to receive that from God with thanksgiving because God says, "In everything give thanks, for



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this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.” So praise Him, and thank Him that He is using this to purify us and help us understand. So even that kind of attitude of turning this around is not about defending injustice. God is the one who deals with that. We shouldn’t be seeking our own justice, we are to be able to be like Jesus when He was reviled, reviled not again, but kept Him trusting Himself to Him who judges righteously. So *Creating a Context for the Truth*—pray, put off pride, put on humility, put off self-interest, put on love.

### 2) Speak the Truth:

Now, *Speak the Truth* about race, and racial issues. I said earlier, and the Bible’s clear teaching is there really is only one race, and in fact, science is catching up on this a little bit. They have a way of catching up to the Bible little by little over time, but you know, for a long time they talk about race, and trying to define what races are, scientists kind of struggle with that. But you know, evolution really came in and monkeyed with it, ha, no pun intended. My best puns are always accidental, entirely accidental, came in and monkeyed with our understanding of race.

Darwin had some really crazy ideas about the races. He wasn’t thinking biblically about much, and he messed things up, and a lot of his ideas got caught up into the movement called ‘*Eugenics*’ in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which was behind, interestingly enough, the woman that started Planned Parenthood was a big believer in ‘*Eugenics*’. It felt like the survival of the fittest ought to be there, and they had these ideas, they came up from Darwinism that whites must be farther evolved than blacks because we look less the color of apes than blacks do. This is the kind of thing that people thought, scientists writing, and speculating. And in fact, it was also brought up, Asians are the farther evolved than whites because they have less body hair than whites on average. Look what man finds when he is just left to himself. The Bible says we all came from one man, Acts 17:26, when Paul is preaching the Gospel in Athens, he says just that. He says, he is encouraging them to turn from their idolatry, and he says, “Listen, God is not served by human hands as though He needed anything,” this is Acts 17:25, “since He Himself, since God Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;”

***Acts 17:26 ~ and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,***

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Basically, biblically, there is only one race. There is not the idea of race as a distinction, or different kinds of humanity is not found in Scripture. You do have ‘*ethnos*’, that is different families of people that are the nations, but ultimately the Bible sees it as we are all of Adam. And so, we’re all created in the image of God, Genesis 1:26-27. Every human being is created in the image and likeness of God. The words that are used there in that first chapter of the Bible, ‘*image*’ and ‘*likeness*’, the idea is to replicate, to reflect the glory of God, to replicate something of His image, to be a visible manifestation of His glory in the creation. Every human being has this high calling.

Psalms 8, the psalmist, as he thinks about the vastness of the heavens, David says, “When I consider the heavens, the work of Your fingers, the firmament which You’ve made, I look at the vastness of the heavens, I say, ‘What is man that You remember him? Or the son of man that You take thought of him?’ When I look at all You have to look at, with all that You’ve done, how could You be possibly stooping down to look at the speck of dust on this little planet?” The psalmist goes on to say, “You have made man a little lower than God, and You have crowned him with majesty, and glory.” God chose to give man majesty and glory. What this says is, there is a chasm between man and every other created thing.

You know the similarities of animals, we all come from the dust of the earth, yes, but man alone is in the image of God. Man alone has the capacity to worship God. Man alone was created to, in His basic makeup, his personal, his psyche, the way that we are made, we are made to reflect the glory of God. Cats are not people, dogs are not people, every single human being is of infinite worth because God has placed them, or of incredible worth, we won’t say infinite worth, incredible worth because God has placed that value upon them.

So races, how did we come to have this idea of race? Well, that comes to the second point of the fall. It’s a little more complicated. I’m moving to my second point. Creation, there’s only one physical race. That’s the main point of creation. Physically there is only one race. Every child of Adam is a human being, and that’s the only race biblically. Now, how do you come to have black, and yellow, and white, and all the different sub-groupings?

Well, to understand that, you have to put it into context biblically of the fall. When Adam fell, the whole race fell. So every human being is fallen. We are sinners. And what you see when you walk through Genesis, God creates man in His image to reflect His glory. He makes man male and female to perfectly reflect His glory

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in the marriage relationship, one man and one woman for life. Then He gives man one command. “Don’t eat from this one tree, The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.” There was one prohibition in the whole world. That’s the character of God. Man violates that one prohibition, and he destroys himself, his relationship with God, and the creation itself. What you see as Genesis is unfolding, because remember God is showing us this history of what happened so that He can teach us how it is that we can be saved. He’s showing us the fundamental reality of our problem, because when man sins, he knows something’s not right, but he has no idea of the magnitude of how bad things are.

This is how people are. We think we’re messed up, but we don’t think we’re that bad. But if you read the Bible, you find out you are a whole lot more messed up than you ever imagined, and the good news is when you understand that, then you can be saved, because you can’t be saved until you know that you’re lost. God is good to show us how lost we are. In Genesis 3, man sins, and the first thing that happens when man sins is he knows that he is naked, and he hides from God. God calls and man hides. There’s a breach in the relationship between God and man. Man does no longer know God whom he was created to know intimately, to walk with in the cool of the day, to fellowship with, God honoring man by letting him name the animals. All that is now radically fractured, and not only is man hiding from God, but now he can’t be naked and unashamed anymore. The man and the woman were naked and unashamed. They were able to be completely transparent in their lives with no fear of exploitation, no fear of humiliation, no fear of anything but love. And what happens is when God comes down and says, “Who told you that you were naked?” Adam says, “We can’t come out. We’re naked.” God says, “Who told you that you were naked?” That’s a good question. He says, “What happened?” Basically the Lord asked what happened, and what does Adam do? He immediately passes the buck. “It’s that woman. It’s her fault. She gave me some of the fruit and I ate it.” And then the woman, what does she do? “It’s the serpent. He deceived me, and I ate.” And in reality, when the man said, “It’s that woman,” he said, “It’s that woman that You made. Things were great until You made her. Just pointing it out. Just saying.”

So what you have is a fracture in the relationship with God, and a fracture in our ability to even own up to our own responsibility, and then you have the broken relationship, because God says, “Now what’s going to happen is there is going to be disharmony in human relationships. The woman’s desire is going to be for her husband, and you will rule over her. The woman’s going to want to control you, and manipulate you, and in a sense dominate you to bring you to do what she

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needs, and you're going to rule over her in a way that hurts her, and this is the mess that you've made, because to be out of relationship with Me is to immediately be out of relationship with one another."

Then in Genesis 4 with Cain and Abel, what happens? Adam and Eve begin to have a family. Two of their sons get into conflict. Cain kills Abel because Abel's offering was acceptable to God and his wasn't. He murders him. Really? Murder him? This is showing how wicked sin is. Later in the chapter, one of his descendents Lamech boasts that, "Hey, if Cain was protected by God after he killed Abel, may I be doubly, because I killed a man for insulting me, and a boy for bothering me. I've killed more people than Cain did." He's bragging about it.

Then in Genesis 6 you see that the thoughts of man are only evil all the time, so God has to destroy the world with a flood. Look how much of a mess the world is. And then in Genesis 11 after the flood, Noah's three sons begin to populate the earth, and they begin to build a city, and at Babel they build the tower of Babel. And what you have is man apart from God united together speaking one language. When you bring mankind together, what does he do? Or you can ask the question, what really brings man together? There's one thing that brings sinful men together. This is the one thing that will unite humanity, and that is opposition to God. They were big into it. This was the first *We are the World* concert, and they basically wanted to build a tower to reach to the heavens to make a name for themselves, because they were not going to worship God. And God comes down and in His mercy disperses them across the face of the earth, and confuses their languages, because there was some amazing potential that man had for evil, that as he separates himself from God, comes together in oneness in a demonic kind of oneness, there will be no end to what evil he can do. So God in His mercy comes down and separates man over the four corners of the earth. It was a function of our sin.

So as He separates us, what happens then is the Lord continuing His governance of creation, we can look at it and say genetic isolation leads to genetic differences. People in one part of the world started looking a certain way, and people in another part of the world were looking a different way. But the real problem was the divisions and the hatred come. And I've said this, that the one thing that unites people is opposition to God. I saw this so amazingly played out back after September 11<sup>th</sup> on one of the Larry King broadcasts. I know I've mentioned this before, but to me it's just so powerful. They were talking about terrorism and religious disharmony, and they had a group of people there discussing it. John MacArthur was the Evangelical Christian. They had a Jewish Rabbi. They had a

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Muslim Imam. They had Deepak Chopra who's kind of a New Age sort of quasi-Hindu guy, and I think they had a Buddhist. It was an incredibly diverse group of people whose religious views are basically mutually exclusive. I mean, the Hinduism is a little less so, but basically they don't like each other, and especially who would you think didn't like each other—nobody would have more disharmony, probably, than the Jewish Rabbi and the Muslim, right? Well, they all united together against John MacArthur. It was unbelievable. They were like taking turns at John. "Yeah hey, that was a good one. Let me go at him now." Why? It's because man in his fallenness and in all of his idolatry, the one thing he hates is the worship of the one true God, and he was proclaiming the one true God, and that's what united everybody. It was basically a tower of Babel happening again. "We'll unite against the one true God."

All the divisions and hatred in our world, whether they be micro in a family that's broken, or macro in ethnic racism, or even the horrors of genocide, all of these things flow from sin and from our disconnection to God. You have it all over the world. I mean, think about all of the different—in America we have the issue of racism that for hundreds of years we've seen. I mean, how could we have believed that we could enslave people? Now, when you put it in context, I read an article actually by someone talking about Thomas Sowell's book. Thomas Sowell is one of my favorite political commentators. He's an African-American who is at Stanford University, and he's written for a number of years about political issues, and particularly race. He points out that slavery has always been a part of the culture of man.

When you look at every major culture, slavery was a part, and it was until the last 200 years. There were slaves in Rome, there were slaves in Greece, there were slaves in China, and it's always been a part of our culture, and it's really the Gospel that has changed that, but it took us a while, and in America, surprisingly, we struggle with this more than we should have. I mean, we seemed to be getting it right in the Declaration of Independence, didn't we? "All men are created equal," and yet we then lived with this inconsistency. But the reality is every single place, there has been the tendency by some to exploit others, and the people in power to do that. Sowell writes that. He says that when you go back you can see Blacks enslaving Blacks in Africa throughout history. You can see Muslims enslaving people. It's all over the place.

You see ethnic hatred. Japanese don't like Koreans. Koreans don't like Japanese. Englishmen aren't crazy about Scotsmen. Scotsmen aren't crazy about the English.



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A funny story, do you remember John Carrick that comes and preaches for us sometimes? He's an Englishman, a Presbyterian. Some of you already know where I'm going with this. He preached for us, and we had a Korean gentleman Chul Yoo who was worshiping with us at that time. He's now an Associate Pastor of another church in the area. Chul came up to Dr. Carrick after he had preached his message with his accent, and Chul said, "What part of Scotland are you from?" Now, that's a good assumption. The Presbyterians are mostly Scottish over there. You don't have that many English Presbyterians. It was a good assumption, but he wasn't listening carefully enough to the accent, so Dr. Carrick shot back, looking at Chul, and said, "What part of Japan are you from?"

It's just a part of reality. One of our missionaries, Chris Brackett, ministers in what was formerly Yugoslavia, Croatia. One country was the Croats, the Bosnians, the Serbs. There was incredible ethnic hatred between all three of those groups, and when you look at the history, right now you've got genocides happening in the Middle East. Genocide has been happening in Sudan, Black on Black violence and slavery. It's religiously motivated and tribally motivated. Think about Apartheid in South Africa. Dr. Mack has shared with us as he's ministered to us in the last few years, when he's ministering in South Africa these last ten or eleven years. Just the astonishing level of racism that existed in that culture for so many years, you look at these things and you say, "Wow." We really shouldn't be surprised when we see it. We should be surprised more that we don't see more of it. But we don't have to live with it as Christians. It may be out there. We can't control what other people think of us, but we can control how we see other people. And if we think biblically, we can see every human being no matter what their skin color, what their nationality, what their background, we can see them as God sees them, as a person created in His image, and who if they don't know Him, needs the Gospel.

We need to speak the truth about creation, speak the truth about the fall, but then speak the truth about the Gospel. The Gospel is the place where human division, human separation, human hatred is broken down. We read from Ephesians 2 earlier. There the apostle Paul is writing to Gentiles, a church mostly of Gentile believers, and he's basically telling them, listen, the most greatest ethnic divide that ever existed is not the difference between Black in White in America or South Africa, it's not the difference between Japanese and Korean, but the greatest ethnic divide that ever existed was the difference between Jew and Gentile, and it was one that in the wisdom of God, God set into motion as a part of revealing to us His plan of salvation.

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Now, there are people who will read the Old Testament, as people often do, they read the Bible and twist and distort the Scriptures to their own destruction, but if you read the Old Testament correctly, you don't see a basis for racism. You do see that there is ethnic distinction, but the motivation behind it is not rooted in physical difference. It's in spiritual fellowship. The reason that the Jews were to be separate from the Canaanites and the people around them was because the Canaanites worshiped other gods, and the Jews were to be holy unto the Lord. It was about spiritual separation, not physical, nothing physiological in the other person to keep them.

In fact, God makes really clear, "Come out from them and be separate. Don't intermarry," and the amazing thing is that Christian ministers have taught that verse and those ideas in the most perverted ways at times in saying that interracial marriage is against the word of God. They don't know how to read their Bible. I will say interracial marriage is against the word of God if you understand what the Bible says about interracial marriage. This is it. If you are in Christ, you are not to marry someone who's in Adam. That is the only interracial marriage that is forbidden in Scripture. If you are in Jesus and someone else is in Jesus, it doesn't matter the color of their skin. The first thing that you should be looking for, young man, young woman, as you think about marriage, is does this person love the same God that I love? Can we walk together and serve Christ together? That's the issue, and that's the right interpretation of those verses in the Old Testament.

It wasn't about the fact that the person came from a different family group, or had some different characteristics. No, they're idolaters. They don't love God. So God in His wisdom, He's basically in the Old Testament baby talking with us. I've used that expression. He's progressively revealing to us His plan of salvation. What He's teaching us in the Old Testament is there are two races of people. There are the people who are in covenant relationship with the one true God, and there's everybody else who's not in covenant relationship with the one true God. Those are the two races.

That is laying the groundwork for what we see in the New Testament in Romans 5, for instance, where the apostle Paul says, "Through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, for all have sinned. Through one man, condemnation came into the world. All in Adam are condemned." But then it says, "All who are in Christ are made alive." And the picture that Paul is making there is basically a Puritan theologian said it this way, that at the Judgment Seat, in one sense there are really only two men at the

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Judgment. Those men are Adam and Christ, and everybody else that has ever lived will be in the train of one of those two men. You will either be in Christ, brought into the presence of God forever, or you will be in Adam, separated from God forever. That's it, and the reality of what Jesus has done for us is celebrated by the New Testament in so many wonderful places.

***Galatians 3:28 ~ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.***

No Jew, no Greek, no slave, no free, no male, no female, ultimately. As far as standing before God, man and woman are equal in honor before the Lord. In Colossians 3:11, Paul there says you have now been renewed. You're part of a renewal that the Spirit has worked in you now that you've become a Christian:

***Colossians 3:11 ~ a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.***

The reality is if you go back, you don't have to trace any of our lineage back. We all go back to Adam, but if you just want to stop anywhere along the way, the reality of our ugliness is there. I mean, the fact that you're in the image of God, you can go back to every culture and you can see there are some beautiful things in every culture—the art, the contributions of every single culture, and we ought to appreciate that as Christians. But if you also go back and look at every single culture, you see a lot of ugly stuff. I mean, you see all kinds of idolatry, violence, wickedness. Every single one of us, I mean, my family roots as I can tell, go back to Germany and England, and there were some messed up people in Germany and England, wicked idolaters. But for the grace of God I'd still be there in that kind of wickedness and idolatry.

So there is no basis of prejudice in this, and the issue is if you're in Christ, then you have now come into the family of God, and if you were a barbarian or a Scythian, the Scythians were the worst barbarians. Even if you were a Scythian, Paul says, forget it. Now you're in Christ. The dividing wall, when he says in Ephesians 2, *the dividing wall of hostility*, that the dividing wall of enmity has been broken down, he's basically using the image of the temple. There was the ability for a Gentile to walk into the temple courts but not to go beyond the wall of the

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Gentiles. Only a Jew could pass there closer into the presence of God. He says that now that wall is broken down. There is no wall.

As you read the Old Testament carefully, you see the distinction between Jew and Gentile was there to teach them that you're either in the covenant with God, and therefore part of His family, or you're not. And even though there are some things in the Old Testament that, as I said, it's baby talking with us, it's showing us from the beginning before Christ has come, this is how it must be, but you see grace all sprinkled along in the Old Testament.

I said that Moses says, "Come out from them and be separate." He emphasizes, "You're not to intermarry in the Promised Land." He points out how wicked the people are there in Canaan. Leviticus 19 and 20 we looked at when we were talking about homosexuality, talks about all kinds of heinous sins that were done there. They burned their children in the fire offering them to Molech. They commit all kinds of atrocious sexual sin, homosexual sin, bestiality. "These are the things that the people in the land are doing. When you go in, be separate from them, separate unto Me, holy unto Me." And God is basically teaching the whole world, listen, what we need is to be part of that covenant people. Look how He's blessing them. We need to go to Jerusalem. We need to go be a part of that, and all throughout Old Testament history you have Proselytes coming. God goes down into Egypt and He delivers His people through the plagues, and He brings great suffering on Egypt. But do you know why He did it? He tells them at the beginning, "...that the Egyptians may know that I am the Lord." God had a redemptive purpose.

The Egyptians were worshiping Ra. They were worshiping their pantheon of false gods, but the Lord allows this circumstance to happen where He goes down and He afflicts them with all those plagues so that they can know that the one God that really exists is the God of the Israelites. So it says there in Exodus, when the people left after the Passover, many Egyptians followed with them. There were Egyptians who said, "That's the true God. We want to follow Him." It was God's saving grace at work.

You see the strong exhortation is not to intermarry, but then you see these amazing tokens of grace. How about the story of Ruth the Moabitess. She marries a Jewish boy. He wasn't supposed to marry her. There's the story of her mother-in-law Naomi. Ruth's husband dies, her brother-in-law dies, her father-in-law dies, and there she is with Orpah her sister-in-law, and her mother-in-law Naomi in the land

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of Moab. They're going to head back to Bethlehem, and Naomi says, "You guys stay here and find yourselves husbands," and Ruth in chapter 1 basically says, "No, wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God." She says, "I want to follow your God."

Do you remember the story of Boaz? The two women are now back in Israel and things aren't good for them. They don't have a man. They don't have any land. They're in trouble. Naomi says, "Go out and gather and glean from the field." She sends her over to Boaz's field. Boaz is a much older man than Ruth, and Ruth comes in and she's gleaning in the field, and Boaz comes to her and he says, "Hey, don't go anywhere else. You glean here. We'll make sure you have enough to eat." He basically says this in Ruth Chapter 2. "I've heard all about you and the kindness you've showed to your mother-in-law, and I want to tell you that the Lord to whom you've come to seek shelter under His wings will bless you."

That's the picture of what the Gentiles were supposed to do. Come seek shelter under the wings of Yahweh. And then she ends up marrying Boaz, remember? Boaz says, "You were lost, but you've come to seek shelter under the wings of Yahweh."

Do you know who Boaz's mom was? Her name was Rahab. Do you remember the story of Rahab? God destroyed Jericho, but He saved Rahab and her family, Rahab the harlot, the prostitute. Rahab the harlot married then a man named Salmon, because it wasn't about interracial marriage. It was about marriage within the covenant. Rahab has come to take shelter. When Boaz said that about Ruth, he was thinking about his mom. "You've come to take shelter under the wings of Yahweh. He is a God of mercy and love. You will find the shelter."

Then in God's amazing grace, Boaz can't believe it, and he's probably, I don't know how old he is. Maybe he's 60 and she's 25 or something, and she wants to marry him, and he's just like thrilled. He's a single guy, he's got a good living, he's got a good place, but he's old. But she marries him. She's thrilled to have a man like that, that loves her like that, that's called her to Christ in the same way he called her to the covenant community. And then they have a child and his name is Obed, and then Obed has a son and his name is Jesse. Jesse has a son and his name is David.

God not only said, "Listen, Ruth. Listen, Rahab. Come under My wings." But He then let them be in the physical line of Christ. Jesus' body came from ultimately at one point, from Ruth the Moabitess and Rahab the harlot. Is that not an amazing



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God of grace? And He says, “Listen, this is who I am, and so My people are to reflect the kind of love that I have.” So when you come to Christ, you come to be part of a body that is to be one. We are to learn to love each other and understand each other, to realize that we come from different places, different challenges. Even in the same ethnic group, we’ve all kinds of differences, but in Christ, we who were far off have been brought near, and we need to manifest our nearness to Christ by our love for one another.

The whole world is looking for people that can speak like Ben Watson did into the darkness, and the fear, and the anxiety, and the anger, to speak grace, to breathe grace, but the world is looking even more than that, not just for our words, but for our actions. When you and I can bridge the gaps that separate us and become one, and love each other, and the way we do it is we gather at the cross. If you keep looking at Jesus and you keep looking at the cross, every other difference diminishes. All the enmity is abolished through the cross. So we keep lifting up Christ, keep loving Him, and then keep letting His love flow through us to everybody else, because no matter what our background, we all ultimately are children of Adam, doomed—apart from grace, apart from Christ, we would be hopeless and helpless without God in the world, but praise God we have got a hope. We have got a Savior, and He wants us to be one.

Even as He prayed on the night before He was crucified, “Father, what I want to pray for right now is that they who will believe through these men the disciples, that they may be one just as We are One.” The world is looking for that kind of testimony. This is an incredible opportunity. We shouldn’t be so discouraged about the things that we see when we look at the news. Turn off the news and start praying, and seeking, and call somebody, and spend some time talking about how great Jesus is, and let the Lord lift up His glory in these days.

Let’s pray together...

*Our Father, we thank You that You are a God who saves, that You are a God whose love endures forever. You want us to have that hammered home in that Psalm 136, to remember it because it’s so hard for us to believe, but Your love endures forever. And those who will humble themselves, and bow their knees to You, and submit to Your Son as their King, who will trust in His atoning death at Calvary where His blood was shed for our sins, if they will place all their trust in Him, repenting of their sins, trusting in His resurrection, then they will know Your love which endures forever, and they will never be separated from that love.*

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*Father, what a glorious hope we have to give to a world that is lost, and in darkness, and in despair. Fill us with the joy and the wonder of Christ. Fill us more and more with love for each other. Help us, Lord, to learn to love each other better every day, and may we be a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid. Father, may they know we're Your disciples, Lord Jesus, by our love, one for another. We pray this in Your glorious Name, Amen.*

“Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part IV”

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