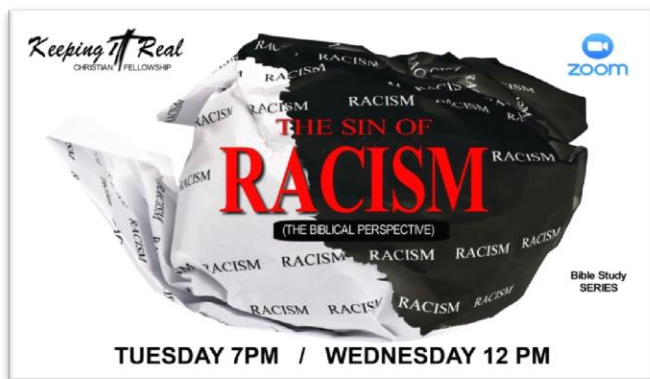


“THE SIN OF RACISM” Pt. 4

“Jesus said to him, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’*” -- Matthew 22:37-39



Biblically, sin is anything that falls short of God’s will and glory, that violates his law and His character (1 John 3:4; Romans 3:23). There are at least four (4) ways in which what we will be calling “racism” is a violation of God’s glory and therefore sin. IT IS SIN!

3. Because of the Gospel of Justification by Grace Through Faith Alone. To understand and to make progress against racism as sin we must also understand racism - as a violation of the principle of grace salvation at the heart of the gospel. Paul says as much in (**Galatians 2:14-16**).

Paul finds Peter refusing to have table fellowship with Gentile fellow believers, and Paul does not appeal to him on the grounds of failure to love his neighbor or honor the image of God (though he could have). Instead he says that attitudes of racial and cultural superiority **“are not in line with the gospel.”** They violate the gospel which equalizes us all as sinners and as recipients of grace, apart from anything about us.

When you rely on your own achievements or pedigree, or behavior more than the justifying work of Christ for your sense of significance and security ... it makes you “radically insecure.”

4 BASIC REASONS WHY RACISM IS SIN

1. Because of the image of God.
2. Because of the commandment to love your neighbor.
3. Because of the new creation.
4. **Because of the Gospel of Justification by grace through faith alone.**

That insecurity shows itself in a variety of forms—arrogance and pride, or self-hatred and shame, or defensive criticism of others. One bitter and common fruit from this failure to grasp grace salvation and make it your heart’s operating principle—is **Racism.**

When Paul rebuked Peter for not living in line with the gospel, he wasn’t shaming him and putting pressure on his will to comply. **He was reminding him that his racism ... was a failure to grasp the good news of God’s salvation.** That is the path of humility and hope that can change people.

Paul’s basic argument to Peter is this:

A) “God did not have fellowship with you on the basis of your race and culture (v.15). Though you were good and devout, your race and customs had nothing to do with it — your relationship with God is based on grace.” **Therefore ... B)** “How then can you have fellowship with others on the basis of race and culture (v.14)?”

Let's notice two things about what Paul is doing here ...

First, Paul's analysis of the sin is noteworthy. He does not simply say that racism is a sin ... although it is indeed a failure to love one's neighbor as one's self (cp. Luke 10:25-37). Rather, **Paul is laying bare the spiritual roots of racism — it is a rejection of the gospel of salvation and a return to justification by our moral efforts or pedigree. Christians who fall into racism are continuing to trust in works-righteousness in at least one part of their lives. Their hearts still oppose grace and seek to find ways of self-justification.** They try to devise ways to feel superior, more acceptable, and better than others... and they use their racial characteristics to do so!

Second, Paul's actual treatment of the sin is brilliant. He did not simply say to Peter, *"Repent of the sin of racism, you bigot!"* ... **but rather**, he said, *"Repent of the sin of forgetting your gracious welcome by God through the costly sacrifice of Christ."* **Paul did not focus just on the behavioral sin, but also on root of the self-righteousness beneath it.** This approach is far more persuasive and effective than simply ranting at someone for being a racist. **Why? Because ... Peter's racial pride was also grounded in fear (v.12 – he was afraid).**

When our sin is rooted in fear ... we need to be loved and strengthened in order to get the courage to do right in spite of our fear. **If Paul only said, "Your racism is a violation of the rules of God," that fearfulness would not have been addressed. But when Paul said, "Your racism is a violation of the grace and mercy of God to you," he was also addressing Peter's fear. He appealed ... "You've forgotten Christ's love for you, Peter."** In Ephesians 2, Paul explains that the cross removes ***the pride and self-aggrandizement that leads to racial animosity and human disunity.***

IN CONCLUSION ... RACISM IS A SIN BECAUSE IT:

- Denies the very source of humanity ... the image of God in humankind;
- Destroys God's likeness in every person ... and thus repudiates creation and its goodness;
- Assumes that human beings are not equal before God ... and are not part of God's family;
- Is contrary to biblical teaching;
- Denies basic justice and human dignity;
- Is a blatant denial of the Christian faith;
- Is incompatible with the Gospel;

- Is a flagrant violation of human rights;
- Separates us from God and from other human beings;
- Makes us blind to the reality of people's suffering and ...
- Perpetuates racist attitudes, practices and institutional racism.

We must confess that racism is a sin, not only as individual Christians, but also as Churches! To affirm that racism is a sin has a radical implication for the churches: which brings the radical commitment to overcome it!

The Church is to show the world ... how in Christ the lost community of humanity can be recovered. We are to be an "alternate city" of God (**Matthew 5:14-17**) in the midst of every "City of Man," showing the unity of persons across culture and race and class barriers that only Christ can bring!