

Dr. Nicolas Ellen

I. Central Definitions of Racism

- A. Racism can be defined as the belief that one people group is more valuable than another and the practice of distinguishing one people group as more important than another.¹
- B. “Fundamentally, racism has to do not merely with real or perceived differences between people groups but with the value and significance of these differences. It has to do with the presumption of superiority over other people groups and the conduct of personal and social life that manifest this presumption in personal, communal, and sociocultural ways. Racism has to do with beliefs, actions, and structures that centralize some by marginalizing others on the basis of supposed differences.”²
- C. Whereas the word racism is not in the Bible, the concept can be understood as a practice of unbiblical partiality (i.e. ungodly bias towards people groups that results in elevating one people group and demeaning another people group; **a respect of persons not sanctioned by God.**)

Key Point of Sermon:

When we choose to provide a logical reason as to why racism (i.e. unbiblical partiality, an ungodly bias towards people groups, **a respect of persons not sanctioned by God**) should be an acceptable operation in society, we are demonstrating “a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12).

II. Consider these Insights on Proverbs 14:12:

- A. “The rightness is present only as a phantom, for it arises wholly from a terrible self-deception; the man judges falsely and goes astray when, without regard to God and His word, he follows only his own opinions. It is the way of estrangement from God, of fleshly security; the way of vice, in which the blinded thinks to spend his life, to set

¹ John Piper, *Bloodlines* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway), 239. Kindle Edition.

² Douglas R. Sharp, *No Partiality: The Idolatry of Race and the New Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 52.

himself to fulfil his purposes; but the end thereof (אֶחָרִיתָהּ with neut. fem.: the end of this intention, that in which it issues) are the ways of death.”³

- B. “We have here an account of the way and end of a great many self-deluded souls.
1. Their way is seemingly fair: It *seems right* to themselves; they please themselves with a fancy that they are as they should be, that their opinions and practices are good, and such as will bear them out. The way of ignorance and carelessness, the way of worldliness and earthly-mindedness, the way of sensuality and flesh-pleasing, seem right to those that walk in them, much more the way of hypocrisy in religion, external performances, partial reformations, and blind zeal; this they imagine will bring them to heaven; they flatter themselves in their own eyes that all will be well at last.
 2. Their end is really fearful, and the more so for their mistake: It is *the ways of death*, eternal death; their iniquity will certainly be their ruin, and they will perish with a lie in their right hand. Self-deceivers will prove in the end self-destroyers.”⁴
- C. “Decisions that seem right, humanly speaking, may be totally wrong by God’s standards. Human nature, aided by the work of Satan, can make darkness appear as light (see 2 Cor. 11:14). Believers should always compare their own thoughts with Scripture (see 16:1–3; 21:2; 24:12).”⁵

Key Question to Consider:

How does this verse apply to the issue of providing a logical reason why racism is acceptable?

III. Racism can be understood as a practice of unbiblical partiality (i.e. ungodly bias towards people groups that results in elevating one people group and demeaning another people group; a respect of persons not sanctioned by God). God declares that this is sin. Therefore, anyone who is trying to present a logical reason why racism is acceptable is in contradiction to God. Thereby, demonstrating a way that seems right to man but ends in the way of death. Consider this logic that has been put forth as a good reason why racism is acceptable:

- A. Human patterns are determined by genetic factors.
- B. Therefore, character, personality, physical characteristics, mental/intellectual abilities, as well as social and cultural development, are genetically based.

³ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 6 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 215.

⁴ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 985.

⁵ H. L. Willmington, *Willmington’s Bible Handbook* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1997), 337.

- C. According to researchers' evaluation and classification of people groups, there are people groups that are superior to other people groups in character, personality, physical characteristics, mental/intellectual abilities, as well as cultural development due to genetics.
- D. Therefore, groupings of people can be ranked on a hierarchical scale from superior to inferior based on genetics.
- E. As a result, differential treatment of persons and people groups makes sense according to who is superior and inferior, who is stronger and weaker, etc.

IV. A Biblical Response to the Above Logic for Racism

- A. God created man in His Image. (Genesis 1:26-28)
- B. God created man with a material and immaterial nature. (Genesis 2:7)
- C. Man's ability to think, reason, desire, speak, act and relate derives from his immaterial nature, not his physiological structure. (Proverbs 4:23, Proverbs 3:5, Proverbs 23:7, Luke 6:45, Mark 7:17-23)
- D. The physiological structure of mankind is the instrument of his actions not the determiner of his actions. (Romans 6:12-13)
- E. All mankind derives his origin from Adam and Eve. All mankind is created in the image of God. Therefore, all ethnicities are equal immaterially and materially because they all derive from God the Creator. Therefore, no people group is less than or greater than another people group, but all come from the same origin. (Genesis 3:20, Acts 17:26)
- F. God is no respecter of persons and has no hierarchical structure for mankind. He will condemn and save mankind based on each one's faith or lack thereof, not according to his or her ethnicity. (Romans 2:9-11)
- G. It has never been proven that genes connect physiology, intellectual capacities or cultural expressions. The classification of people groups does not happen without personal bias, meaning and values placed on those classifications not clarified, validated, or stated implicitly or explicitly by God. God is no respecter of persons; mankind is. Therefore, the classification of individual people groups with bias, bestowed meaning and value is the result of mankind leaning on his own understanding, following the traditions men, following the elementary principles of the world, living by earthly, natural, demonic wisdom, and worshiping the creation above the Creator (i.e. Social Darwinism/Eugenics). (Proverbs 14:12, Colossians 2:8, James 3:13-4:4, Romans 2:9-11, Romans 1:18-25)

- V. **In order to overcome racism, it must first be acknowledged as sin. We must then pursue the wisdom of God and turn away from worshipping the creation above the Creator demonstrating that one is walking in earthly, natural, demonic wisdom. We must walk in love toward God and others. (Proverbs 28:13, James 3:13-4:10, Galatians 5:6,13)**
- A. There must be an **acknowledgement** of racism as **sin** against God and others.
 - B. One must **confess** their **sin** of racism and **acknowledge** to God their need for forgiveness from God unto salvation or sanctification, as well as confess their sin of racism and pursue forgiveness from people they have practiced racism against where appropriate to do so.
 - C. One must have a **transformation** of mind through understanding God's agenda for the creation of mankind.
 - D. One must **submit** to God's **agenda** for their existence and seek to love all people through serving them accordingly.

Reflection

"The sin of racism is manifest in our failure to acknowledge that our status as beloved creatures, our manner of loving and our identity as lovers are not ours to determine or to surrender to others because of either our race or the race of others. ... The sin of racism is also manifest in the fact that human status, ways of life and personal identities have been established in a symbolic universe that has enthroned race as the ultimate arbiter of meaning. Racial self-and group-interest has become the motivation for human conduct, and the spurious strategies for dominion, segregation, and integration have perverted God's intention for a community of love. We have rejected the promise and the Promiser, we disbelieve that God has a different purpose for us, and we submit only to assertions that make sense to us on our terms. And we have the audacity to claim that God intends it to be this way, that what we see as race and the differences we make of race are consistent with God's purposes. The notion that our identity, morality and sociality are grounded in and determined by racial interest is nothing more than the active or passive expression of egoism. Proudful people have no need for God, and slothful people have only an indifferent God." ⁶

⁶ Douglas R. Sharp, *No Partiality: The Idolatry of Race and the New Humanity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 255-256.