

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:

Since racism is a sin issue of the heart that is manifested in sin actions in the culture, God’s answer is the grace of salvation, sanctification, and service that overcomes it. The universal and the local church is to be the place where we see the removal of racism and the reconciliation of people back to God and to one another. As people see multiethnic individuals walk in oneness and love for God and others, the world will know that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. Therefore, there is a way we are to function in the church in relation to ethnicity and God’s agenda.

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.

II. Consider these Quotes:

- A. "At the central core of racism we find the sinful hearts of men living in a fallen world. This fundamental problem has no earthly cure. There is no speech that can be given, no law that can be passed, and no publicity campaign that can solve it. Only the truth of God's Word combined with the strength of God's Holy Spirit living within us can bring us victory over this sin."³
- B. "Because of our culture's racist roots, because of the way the world thinks, because of the influence of Darwinian thinking, we have been programmed to look at the exterior rather than the interior of a person, and to make broad judgments based on what we see. Had you not been programmed that way in this culture, you wouldn't see the differences as you do. Different cultures are programmed in different ways. Our biases and prejudice show themselves in different ways, but in every case it is the world and our sinfulness (rather than science and the Bible) that drives our personal racism.....Whatever feature we may look at, no people group has anything that is uniquely different from that possessed by another. Sure, there might be variations in size and color or shape, but they are all essentially the very same features. With a proper understanding of what is happening beneath the skin, all of our so-called 'racial differences' start to look very trivial, don't they?"⁴
- C. "...To be a member of the Body of Christ means that preferences based on class, culture, or race are totally unacceptable to God, and people who make such preferences are candidates for His judgement (James 2:9-13)."⁵
- D. "Openness and brokenness are required to become representatives of Christ in both word and deed. We need to confess and correct past misapplications of certain texts in relation to certain ethnic groups and/or cultural references (Prov. 18:19; 28:13; Acts 10:34-35; James 2:1-9). We must uncompromisingly and unashamedly adhere to proper interpretation of and obedience to the verbally inspired, inerrant Word of God, the Holy Bible (Prov. 23:23; Gal. 2; 3:27-29; Eph 4:1-7,11-16)..... If the church is to move forward as a cohesive body across racial lines, we must be freed to love. Divine love is the glue that holds the body together, a critical building block in committed relationships."⁶
- E. "Skin color is simply a physical trait. It is a feature that has no bearing on one's intrinsic dignity."⁷

³ Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books), 38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 100, 116.

⁵ Tony Evans, *Oneness Embraced: Reconciliation, the Kingdom, and How We Are Stronger Together* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2015), 94.

⁶ A. Charles Ware, *Prejudice and the People of God: How Revelation and Redemption Lead to Reconciliation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2001), 13,32.

⁷ Jemar Tisby. *The Color of Compromise* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 18-19. Kindle Edition.

Ethnicity and the Local Church

III. The Premise:

- A. We all come through one man, Adam, and one woman, Eve. (1 Corinthians 15:45, Genesis 3:20)
- B. Therefore, we are all descendants from the first family, Adam and Eve. (Acts 17:26)
- C. Even though we are all descendants from one family, we are multi-ethnic in our existence. (Revelation 7:9)

IV. The Problem:

- A. One ethnic group is not better than any other ethnic group. (Romans 3:9)
- B. To think your ethnic group is better than any other group is to walk in contradiction to Scripture, which is to walk in ignorance and sin. (Romans 3:9, Romans 10:12)
- C. Regardless of whatever ethnic group a person belongs to, they have a sin condition and are in need of salvation. (Romans 3:9-23, 5:12, 6:23)

V. The Path:

- A. As one puts their faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, they become part of the Body of Christ which is their central identity above the ethnic group they belong to. (Romans 10:12-13, Colossians 3:10-11)
- B. As one becomes a part of the Body of Christ, their ethnicity is neither to be highlighted above their relationship to the Body of Christ, nor to be belittled in their relationship to the Body of Christ. They are to be of the same mind toward others in the Body of Christ. (Romans 12:16)
- C. One does not ignore their ethnicity as part of the body of Christ. They are to be sober in their assessment about themselves in relation to God and others. They just do not allow their ethnicity to become a priority over their relationship to the Body of Christ. Their love is to be without hypocrisy toward others. (Romans 12:3, Galatians 2:11-14, Romans 12:9)

VI. The Practice:

- A. We are to focus on accomplishing God's mission and living according to that mission across ethnic lines as members of the Body of Christ. (Matthew 28:18-20, John 13:34-35)
- B. The world should see how various ethnic groups operate in harmony as these various ethnic groups love one another and fulfill God's purpose together as members of the Body of Christ. (Philippians 2:1-16, 1 Corinthians 1:10)
- C. Injustices, disrespect, and demeaning of various ethnic groups displayed within the culture should not be promoted or practiced within the Body of Christ. (Proverbs 24:23, 1 John 2:9-11, Malachi 2:10)

Key Point: We may be different in ethnicity, but we are one in Christ. We must also see ourselves as multi-ethnic individuals who have personal responsibilities, as well as Kingdom citizens with corporate responsibilities (John 15: 1-17). We must not let discussions and disturbances about and among our ethnicities hinder or distract us from our devotion and dedication to knowing Jesus Christ, becoming like Jesus Christ and being useful to Jesus Christ in the Kingdom agenda mission that connects with and transcends our ethnicities.

VII. Consider These Quotes

- A. "As the love of Christ begins to stir inside your soul, God will show you what to do. You will make the choice and you will act, but it will actually be Christ loving them through you. Whether it is in small steps or large leaps, God can use you to bridge the so-called 'racial barriers' that have been fabricated in our minds through both worldly thinking and evolutionary theory. What a difference it will make in the lives around you as you begin to think and act that way! What a difference it will make in the world as more and more of us take up this cause! We are reclaiming Darwin's garden for Christ. By choosing to act, we are pulling out the weeds of evolutionary thought and replanting with seeds of truth, love, understanding, and compassion. That's what it's all about."⁸
- B. "No one has any ethnic superiority in the church as if they come from some pure strain of godly people. The clear implication from Eph 2:11-22 is that every single believer, no matter what his or her ethnic background, sex, social identity, income, or any other thing, has equal standing with all the saints in light as a full citizen of the inaugurated new creation by the grace of Christ our Lord."⁹

⁸ Ken Ham and A. Charles Ware, *One Race One Blood* (Green Forest, AR: Master Books), 122.

⁹ S.M. Baugh, *Ephesians (Evangelical Exegetical Commentary)* (Lexham Press), 208.

- C. “It is the heart and passion of Jesus Christ for his church to transcend the cultural and economic barriers that separate and divide. Jesus longs for his church to overcome the cultural barriers of racism, nationalism, and economic pride and to embody in a practical way what he created it to be; an attractive yet countercultural family of people very different from one another who love each other deeply and display the presence of the God who is near.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians (The Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)* (Zondervan Academic), 177.