

[SOCIETAL ISSUES THROUGH SCRIPTURE'S EYES]

# Racism Is a Sin

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When God created the world, He created everything in perfect harmony with all creation. Genesis 1:31 says, “God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good.” He was extremely pleased with what He had created. Adam lived in perfect harmony with God until he fell in the Garden of Eden. After the Fall, mankind found themselves subject to the law of sin and death. From that time forward, man has struggled to overcome the disease of sin. For example, in the Book of Genesis we find Cain killing his brother Abel. In addition, God destroyed the entire world because of the wickedness of man’s heart.

Our world is broken because of the ugliness of sin. Sin is the root cause of partiality, prejudice, jealousy, and racism. We find ourselves living in an imperfect world because we are imperfect people bound by sin. We are subject to fleshly appetites. Our corrupt nature desires to exalt itself against that which is pure, righteous, and holy. Men find themselves struggling with covetousness, pride, and arrogance, all of which are the works of the flesh. Paul stated in Romans 7:21 that when he tried to do good, evil was always present. The fallen nature tempts one to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, which leads to arrogance, pride, and supremacy. Throughout the world there have been, and still are, those who show racial supremacy over differences or ethnic and cultural biases.

Many of the Jews, who were God’s chosen people, misconstrued God’s purpose for the nation of Israel as one that meant they were superior to other nations. Instead, the seed of Abraham was to be a blessing to the entire world and was meant to institute God’s plan on earth. He chose the Jewish people as a covenant people unto Himself. They were the avenue through which God would bring salvation to the world.

The separation of the Jews from other nations wasn’t to create a “superior group” but to be an example to the nations. In like manner, God did not save us just to be different or to be superior over the world or act as if we are better than others, but to be an example to the world of God’s grace, love, and mercy.

Because of our sinful world, racialization is embedded in the normal operation of institutions and a collective misuse, which results in diminished opportunities based on ethnicity, cultural biases, and economic status. Racialization is an intentional effort to perpetuate and justify a social system of superiority.

Because of historical issues within our past, different groups view racism differently. As a nation, the Jewish people found themselves experiencing institutional racism as noted in the books of Exodus and Esther and also during the Holocaust of WWII, which was designed to annihilate the Jewish race. The African-American view of racism is different because of their history with slavery and the Jim Crow laws in the South. Because of discrimination in the past, there is a

sensitivity and mistrust that is embedded within the African-American culture. Their past experiences have woven into the culture a sense of suspicion and high sensitivity.

### **Racism Violates God's Word**

In Genesis 1:26, God created man in His image or in His likeness. Paul explained in I Corinthians 12:13 that “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Hence, we are created in the likeness of God and all men are created equal. It does not matter the color of your skin, birth origin, ethnicity, or background. According to Acts 17:26, God “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.”

As Christians we should all be concerned about racism because it violates God's Word and corrupts our relationship with our neighbor. The question was asked of Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied by offering the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which He identified the man who was left half dead in the ditch beside the road as the good Samaritan's neighbor. Sadly, neither the priest nor the Levite bothered to get involved with the situation. As the good Samaritan got involved, the church also should be engaged in making the world a better place. We must recognize that racism is not a white-and-black issue, nor is it an ethnic or cultural issue, but it is a sin issue.

### **Racism Is a Sin Issue**

Just as adultery affects the family structure and fornication affects the morality of a nation, so too does racism affect our society. All of these immoral actions add to the destruction of a nation and its people. Racism, prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination are inconsistent with the gospel. Just as strongly as we believe that adultery and fornication are a sin, we must view racism as a sin. We will never be able to eradicate sin or racism in the world, but we must confront the sin of racism anywhere we find it: in the home, in the church, on the job, even in the communication around the table.

As Christian people, we have an obligation to speak the truth in love. Racism, prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination are contrary to God's design for the church. These sins must be boldly yet lovingly confronted in the same manner in which the apostle Paul confronted certain Jews', Barnabas's and Peter's behavior toward the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-21).

### **Racism Is a Holiness Issue**

As Hebrews 12:14 states, we are to “follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” We must make every effort to live in harmony with all men because all of humanity is created in God's image. We are to love our neighbor as our self. We consider ourselves a holiness movement; holiness is the fabric of who we are—a separated and holy people. Holiness is not the product of the

flesh, but of the Spirit dwelling inside of us.

The Holy Ghost gives us the ability to take on the characteristics of God's nature; hence, Peter reiterated Moses' command for God's people to be holy because God is holy (I Peter 1:16). John 15:12-13 declares, “This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Likewise, John 3:16 states, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.” God loves people of all backgrounds: the rich, the poor, all races, and ethnicities. We are commanded to love one another as Christ loves us.

Throughout church history opportunities have emerged for the church to take the lead in denouncing bias and prejudice. It occurred in Acts 10, when Peter preached to the Gentiles; it happened at the Azusa Street Revival where the Holy Ghost erased the color line; it happened with the Oneness Pentecostal movement under the early Pentecostal Assemblies of the World, and during the 1960s Civil Rights movement. Likewise today, the church must engage in equality for all people, especially when it comes to partiality in our world, injustice in our inner cities, and with the poor and less fortunate. The church must take the lead when it comes to racial harmony in the world because the church represents God's kingdom on earth.

### **Racism Is a Moral Issue**

Throughout history, especially in American history, we recognize that slavery and the Jim Crow laws were formed as a result of racism. Some even felt the Bible supported bias and separation of races, ignoring Scripture verses like James 2:9, “If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors,” and Galatians 3:27-29, “As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” The United States Constitution recognizes that all people are created equal and should have the right to freedom and happiness. The government has attempted to resolve the issue of racism by passing laws to govern people's behavior toward others. However, that won't solve the problem.

Paul said, “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Romans 8:3-5).

The Apostolic church, representative of God's kingdom on the earth, is to denounce injustice on the earth. Neither the government nor its laws will eradicate racism, but the church must exemplify the love of Christ and stand up against injustice in our world. Then we will see change.

### To overcome racism in the world:

1. We must first recognize that racism is sin and treat it as any other work of the flesh. It must be subdued
2. We must confront racism anywhere we find it: on the job, in our homes, in our churches, in our community, whether it is in private or in public conversation.
3. We need to examine our hearts and motives on how we treat others.
4. We must pray for those who struggle with partiality or prejudice, just as we would for someone living in adultery.

5. We must bear the fruit of the Spirit.
6. We must live out the Beatitudes.
7. We must recognize that how we treat a person may define whether or not we are prejudiced. **PH**

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