

## **There's Only One Race, One Way of Grace, and One Family of Faith (Ephesians 2-3)**

*Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on November 6, 2011*

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‘There is no more segregated population in the US than our prison system. When you go into prison, if you’re white you hang out with the white guys, because they’re going to protect you. If you’re black, you hang out with the black guys. If you’re American Indian ... [etc.] you don’t hang out with people that don’t share your skin color, period. We get there Thursday night [Grace Community Church, Minden, NV outreach], and the guys start to come in and you know what happens? Black guys, and white guys, and native Americans, and Asians, and Hispanics, all come and they all sing God’s praises *together* ... putting on display [like Eph. 3:10 says, God’s wisdom, His grace ... It is the gospel that tears down dividing walls of racism [like Eph. 2:14 says] ... the church [is] the theater of God’s glory...because God is doing something that absolutely confounds the [heavenly rulers/authorities/angels] principalities and powers.’<sup>1</sup>

Eph 3:10 “*so that the manifold [or ‘multi-colored’] wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.* [that’s the language of angels watching the church like a theater of God’s glory, as we studied before]  
<sup>11</sup> *This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord ...* <sup>14</sup> *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,* <sup>15</sup> *from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,* <sup>16</sup> *that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man ...”*

The unsearchable riches of Christ (v. 8) are for all the nations in all the world, as God displays His manifold multi-colored wisdom and plan to all the universe (v. 10). It’s a plan God always had (v. 11) for Jews and Gentiles to share equally in all gospel blessings (v. 6). And these riches of God’s glory (v. 16) should affect how we pray and should strengthen us inwardly as we pray in light of this truth. As we prepare to study this prayer next couple weeks, let’s review the great themes of Eph. 2-3 one more time and renew our minds:

- 1. There’s Only One Race**
- 2. There’s Only One Way of Grace**
- 3. There’s Only One Family of Faith**

Thabiti Anyabwile is a black pastor in the Cayman Islands who introduced his message this way at Together for the Gospel 2008:

‘Most of us operate with some working idea, some notion of race and races that is foundational to our worldview. But believing in race [which he explains as some biologically-driven sub-divisions of people, he said it’s] a little bit like believing in unicorns...like unicorns [races is a myth that] does not exist...does not in fact, does not in reality, exist. And ... I want to enroll you on something of a personal and corporate campaign to first of all rid ourselves of that very framework [races based on appearances and biology], and secondly to more fully adopt a new identity, and thirdly ... to teach others to do the same ... [he says we need to] abandon “race-as-biology” as a category in our thinking. Race in the way we commonly use the term, as proxy for differences in appearances, does not exist in truth. I want to be clear [he said]: I’m not saying *the differences we obviously see* do not exist. I’m saying *the explanation we have grown accustomed to* does not exist. Race-as-biology, the theory, is false.’<sup>2</sup>

This can be shown scientifically and Scripturally. If we start with the Word of God's language, not our world's language, Scripture will speak of the unity of humanity, a union we all have in Adam, and God's plan to unite in Christ people from all nations (Greek is *ethne* that we get ethnicity or ethnic group from, that's the biblical terminology, not races). The Bible has virtually nothing to say about color of skin or outward appearance except to say that man judges by it wrongly while God looks at the heart. The Bible doesn't focus on the external epidermis or encourage us to. The OT and NT don't emphasize what's different about us but what's the same: our commonality, common ancestry, continuity in Adam. In words of C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* we're all sons of Adam

We are all of one blood, all of one race, and all in the same family of Adam by birth and nature in sin (Genesis 1-11). That's why we need Christ as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam (Romans 5), and His new birth (Jn 3), a new nature (Eph. 2:10) to bring us into His family by adoption (Eph 1:5). We needed a 2<sup>nd</sup> representative for our race to succeed where the first failed. It was important for His blood to be exactly the same as all of us to redeem us (Eph 1:7, see esp. Heb. 2:14-17). If we are not all descendants of Adam equally and biologically, the same in our origin and original sin, and if Christ was not made like us in every way (Hebrews 2, sharing our flesh, blood, biology, etc.) if not, our union with Adam and Christ in the gospel is undermined

In Ephesians 2:3 Paul speaks to both Jew and Gentile this way:

<sup>3</sup> *Among them **we too all** formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even **as the rest*** [ESV "rest of mankind"]

Our union with the rest of mankind, the doctrine of original sin and depravity that teaches we are all exactly the same in sin and nature and flesh and mind, is essential to the gospel (here, Romans, etc.). We are all *children*, v. 3 calls us, *siblings in sin in the same fallen family naturally* unless and until God supernaturally adopts us and gives us a new union with Christ (2:5-6), until He puts us in a new family that's not according to the flesh or any earthly identity. It's the glorious gospel truth of Eph 2:11-22, 3:6, Rom 3-4, Gal 3, etc., and if we're not literally descendants of Adam ... no gospel for us. The Son of Man only came to seek and save from the race of man.

In the KJV, it says we are all of "one blood" in Acts 17. Which is good for us because the blood of our Jewish Messiah is just like ours and can redeem us whose skin may differ from his. In some translations made in the last 50 years they do use the word "race" for humanity or Israel or God's people but there's not a Greek or Hebrew word that corresponds to *races* as Americans use the term to categorize people based on tone of skin, type of eye, texture of hair. We're all from one blood, or *one man*, other translations say. Paul doesn't focus on outer man, he prays for the inner man, 3:16.

The only Bible dictionary I have that even has an entry for race or races says: "Races in the Bible are restricted to footraces." In other words, when the Bible was translated into English the only "races" it had are "races" where people run like in competitions. There are no races in Scripture, there's only one race of humanity, Jews and Gentiles, whatever their tribe or tongue, genealogy or geography, the Bible emphasizes our sameness, not our superficial differences.

2 Cor 5:16 "Therefore from now on, we regard *no one according to the flesh*"

There's only one race in Scripture. In James 3:7 (NASB), it uses the phrase "the human race" in contrast to the creatures God made. Ephesians uses the terms *Jew* and *Gentiles* or *nations*. Revelation adds tribes, tongues, peoples – but one term you don't see in the Bible is "races." Why am I spending this first point on what is *not* in Scripture? Because this is an area where we need to not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by renewed minds and renewed ways of thinking based on theology not mythology.

The theory of "races" is not based on any exegetical study of the Bible but more from evolutionary theory, another science fiction. Last year when I filled out my U.S. Census and they asked what race I was from, I crossed out their choices and wrote "Human." As I filled out an adoption home-study application, they asked how I'd respond to those with opinions against transracial adoption. I only had a small space to write but I wrote as much as I could to explain I'm not adopting transracially, I'm adopting from the one human race, and there's no such thing as transracial / multi-racial families, scripturally or scientifically, there's only one race, but some are ignorant so I'll educate them. They probably thought I was a freak!

But let me support that even from our changing world's language to show why it's better to use terms from God's unchanging Word. *Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* 1828 defines race: 'The lineage of a family, or continued series of descendants from a parent who is called the stock. A race is the series of descendants indefinitely. Thus all mankind are called the race of Adam...'

This is why Christians into the 1800s, even in the American South who owned slaves, still rejected as a heresy *human poly-genesis* (the theory of multiple races of people with multiple origins). This is traced in a fascinating book put out by Cambridge Press, Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000*. He writes of the 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> centuries: 'unity of the human race was fundamental to Christian theology. If mankind did not spring from a single racial origin then theologians were confronted with a scenario that undermined the very essence of the Christian story...Which posed the greater threat to Southern conservatives, the abolitionist denunciation of slavery or [the polygenist's multiple races theories of man's origins]? Perceptive Southerners recognized that polygenist racialism ... was an even greater threat to their worldview than abolitionism or abolitionist readings of scripture. Ironically, some of the most noted and forthright defenders of monogenesis [one race and origin of man] in the nineteenth century were based in the South ... [but he adds] some nineteenth-century ethnologists, oblivious of the ultimate consequences of this dangerous chain of argument, began to offer racial explanations for the world's ... diversity.'<sup>3</sup> Kidd's book uses science to demolish "races" theory that he ties to rise of evolution.

The secular scholarly standard *Oxford English Dictionary* (20 vol. big set, definitive history of words) defines race: 'group of persons, animals, or plants, connected by common descent or origin ...In early use always the human race, the race of men or mankind...'<sup>4</sup> A 2004 smaller update to that authoritative massive multi-volume dictionary adds: 'In recent years, the associations of race with the ideologies and theories that grew out of the work of 19th-century anthropologists and physiologists has led to the use of the word race itself becoming problematic. Although still used in general contexts, it is now often replaced by other words which are less emotionally charged, such as people(s) or community.'<sup>5</sup>

Most people are not aware that Charles Darwin's book *The Origin of the Species* was subtitled *The Preservation of Favoured Races*. He was using that term "races" the way it had been used before his time of different creatures, but in his book *The Descent of Man*, he re-defined and applied the idea to humans as different sub-species, creatures, or "races." In that book he said that while some of the faculties of women are evolved or advanced, "some, at least, of these faculties are characteristic of the lower races, and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization." In another place in that book he said: "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace the savage races throughout the world."<sup>6</sup>

Those words were fulfilled in the not very distant future, a man 70 years later saw this idea as the duty of the "Aryan race," wrongly believing he was an essentially different race than others, Hitler. A book *Evolution and Ethics*, written by Arthur Keith shortly after World War II: 'The German Fuhrer...has consistently sought to make the practice of Germany conform to the theory of evolution'<sup>7</sup>

Ken Ham, who was in town yesterday, speaks closer to home how his own homeland, Australia, when they found black Aborigines on Tasmania, newspapers declared they found "Missing Links with Mankind" (*New York Tribune*, 1924). Ham writes of these native Australian people, 'biologists from England and Germany began to hunt them down as research specimens ... Hunters were given instruction on how to skin them and prepare their skulls as specimens for museums around the world – all in the name of evolution. Some were taken live; some were killed ...'<sup>8</sup>

Closer to home for me as I adopted a son from Congo and my great grandpa was a missionary in Congo who risked his life to bring the gospel to that country in the early 1900s: Others came to that same country the same years, stole a Congolese man to the U.S. in 1904, making him part of a live monkey-evolution exhibit in a NY zoo in 1906!<sup>9</sup>

Ideas have consequences. Bad ideas combined with bad people can have very bad consequences. I think it's a bad idea to use race theory and terminology developed by people who believed that the white race was the original race that the other races with darker skin degenerated or devolved from. That was the view of Blumenbach, who died in 1840, the leading racial theorist of Europe who pioneered and popularized the idea of many races.<sup>10</sup>

The history of the modern idea of "races" historically can be linked to Darwinism and racism, and even with Christians, much division. Steven Jay Gould, leading 20<sup>th</sup> century evolutionist from Harvard: 'Biological arguments for racism may have been common before [Darwin's writings], but they increased by orders of magnitude following the acceptance of evolutionary theory.'<sup>11</sup> That's not some Bible-thumping fanatic Baptist pastor (like me), that's one of the most famous evolutionists who lived in my lifetime saying that.

But let's get back to the Bible. The *ESV Study Bible* in an article on race explains very well that there is one race, 'descended from Adam and Eve (Gen. 1:26–28), and Eve is "the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20), that is, of all living human beings.

This means that all human beings share equally in the exalted status of being made “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:27) ... Acts 17:26 [says] God “made from one man every nation of mankind ...” biblical record clearly indicates there is only one fundamental race of human beings, all descended from a single set of parents.

... Recent genetic studies from the Human Genome Project give interesting confirmation...[its scientists concluded ‘one race’] DNA studies do not indicate that separate classifiable subspecies (races) exist within modern humans. While different genes for physical traits such as skin and hair color can be identified between individuals, no consistent patterns of genes across the human genome exist to distinguish one race from another. There also is no genetic basis for divisions of human ethnicity.’

Why then do people with different racial characteristics [as the world calls them] originate from different regions of the world? The human race, starting with Adam and Eve, has always included not only genetic variations of eye color, height, and facial appearance, but also of skin and hair color now associated with different racial groups. At some early point when people began migrating to various parts of the earth, some variations within the one human gene pool became geographically isolated from other variations [Gen. 11], so that people living in what is now northern Europe came to look more like each other and different from people living in what is now Africa, or Asia, or North America.’<sup>12</sup>

A geneticist and scientist at Yale did a study awhile back that said it can be shown genealogically how every person living today can be traced to the same set of ancestors as few as 5-7,000 years ago.<sup>13</sup>

That idea of multiple races with multiple origins is old bad science. In a work from Oxford with a chapter entitled “Science and the Myth of Biological Race,” it says: ‘Essentially all anthropologists have given up the attempt to identify races of human beings.’<sup>14</sup>

Another writer sums up the scientific research this way: “A wide range of evidence drawn from the biological and medical sciences directly contradicts the layperson’s assumption [about] external indicators of race ... Just as the study of DNA demolishes any notion of a particular black ‘African’ race, so too this field lays down a decisive challenge to the scientific legitimacy of race in general ... [biologist Alain Corcos calls ‘races’] ‘figments of our imagination’ ... a bogus scientific category ... misleading facts of physical difference into racial ideologies, stereotypes, folklore.’<sup>15</sup> There’s only one race, Scripturally (most important) scientifically

## **2. There is only one way of grace**

This is another point not all Bible reader knows but it’s taught in Eph 2-3 as well as anywhere. There’s never been another way of salvation in any dispensation. It was not works before and now it’s by grace. There was not one track for the Jews and another for us.

It’s not that Israel needed sacrifices and priesthood but we don’t. No one ever gets to heaven without a Priest and without a sacrifice. And no one ever got to heaven with a mere human priest or animal sacrifice. Jesus was the only sacrifice that ever pleased God and satisfied His wrath. All the OT sacrifices were pictures of Christ’s sacrifice to come but never ultimately did away with sin (cf. Heb.). All the OT priests and ceremonies pointed to Christ.

It's only by Christ's work on the cross that any are reconciled (Eph 2:18). Eph 2:13 says it's only the blood of Christ that brings us near. And 2:8-9 is clear the only way anyone was ever saved is **the** one way: *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works ...*

The rest of the chapter makes clear Jews-Gentiles, all nations, have the same one way/gospel: grace alone, faith alone in Christ alone. But God's plan of was not to leave the nations alone, separate from each other, but to bring them together (3:6) to put on display (3:10)

Bryan Chapell summarizes the flow and context better than I can. 'God is using the church to display his glory to the heavens [v. 10]...sinners made perfect from every tribe, people, and nation. This manifold wisdom of bringing together into one redeemed body [v. 6] those who were so universally fallen and so universally different ... is so amazing that it was God's intent to use it to display his wisdom to the heavenly beings. Thus Paul's words create a celestial stage to display the wonders of grace that we can scarcely imagine but must consider in order to fulfill our calling ... in union with other sinners made perfect, and as members of one body [v. 6], we who come from every tribe and nation, people and personality, are on display as a church before the heavenly hosts as a testimony to the wisdom of God, the Creator. The heavenly hosts are to look at those of us in the church with all our sin, differing personalities, cultural prejudices, and color differences and say, "How did God do that?! How did he get such difficult and disagreeable creatures together in one body to praise him? ..."

... Just as Paul's sin makes the grace of God more apparent [3:8], the uniting of sinners in the body of Christ makes the grace of God more brilliant – even to the hosts of heaven. By our unity in Christ's body, the church, we are preaching to the angels about the power, wisdom, and glory of the God who made us. This is the apex of Paul's thought about the church ... the church is intended not only to transform the world but also to transfix heaven [v.10],<sup>16</sup>

### **Which brings us to our last point: #3: *There's One Family of Faith***

In Eph. 3:15 Paul begins to pray in light of God's whole family, as the NKJV translates it, which I think is probably best. God has one big happy family all over earth and in heaven, all that He's adopted into this family (1:5). Paul prays in light of this family. So should we. Our focus shouldn't just be biological family, but our spiritual one. It's a grace to be a part of God's family, in His household, a family including Africans, Asians, Russians, South Americans, etc.

We are to pray in awareness of our family of Christ in the world (3:15), that God would strengthen them in their inner heart (v. 16). 1 Peter 5 says as we cast all our cares on the Lord who cares for us all, v. 9 says pray ***knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.***

Last month I heard in person K.P. Yohannon, of Gospel for Asia, talking about persecution he's received in countries in Asia, being stoned, beaten, etc., but he said others have had greater persecution than he has had "the privilege" of experiencing (he said privilege). Peter says we're to pray with awareness of our brothers and sisters around the world, what they're going through (VOM, 2819, etc.). Do we think of Christians in Iran, India, Pakistan as our family?

I grew up in another nation, as I've shared before, the Philippines, and I loved how our church over there of Chinese, Filipinos, and Americans would sing "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God ... joint heirs with Jesus." That's exactly what Paul is talking about in this passage. We are joint heirs / fellow heirs (v. 6), and as Paul prays, again for his family he doesn't focus on what the outer man looks like, he prays for the inner man (v. 16). And we'll see next week in v. 18 that Paul prays we will comprehend Christ's love "with all the saints." Pray in light of God's one family of faith, all of it. The word "brother" for us shouldn't just be a cliché or clever term we use when we forget someone's name ("hey ..... brother").

If we really believe that we're really a family of faith, the word "brother" and "sister" really means something for us. It will affect how we pray, give, think, live ... or it should. If we really believe we are one race, that will affect how we view others...or it should.

Another closing application from the message I began with goes like this: "picture yourself walking into a lunchroom [or a public eatery or environment] and there are two tables ... You're coming in by yourself and on your left is a table with people *not like you*... some ethnic "other." Table on the right includes some group of people who are ethnically *like you*. What do you think instinctively you do? We gravitate towards people we perceive to be like us. And what's the calculus behind that gravitation? What's the mental mathematics going on that leads that impulse? We go into the room, we look, and at the speed of thought we say, "not like me / like me," "like me, therefore safe ... commonality" ... There's an opposite calculus going on, too: "Not like me ..." [all the opposite]

What we want to replace that calculus with is this ...[for those our world calls another race] "descendants of Adam *like me*, made in the image of God *like me*, fallen sinners *like me*!" It's the emphasis on *like me*, the heritage we share in Adam, that begins to lay for our feet the bridge to cross over "other-ness." ... And if we find out they're Christian, we say "united to Christ *like me*, sharing the Spirit *like me*, having received the promises of eternal life and joy *like me*!"<sup>17</sup> That's my brother or my sister, they're my family!

**2:19** *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household ...*

We're in His house, not just as fellow citizens, but as fellow sons!! Part of God's eternal purpose (3:11) was to adopt children from all nations as heirs (3:6), as Eph 1:5 says God *predestined to adopt us* non-Jews, us who may not look like our Jewish Messiah physically but He makes us look like Him spiritually. God decided to adopt us who aren't like Him, and treat us like His only begotten Son Jesus, to the praise of the glory of His grace (Eph 1:6). Christ delights to take people who look differently and make them look more like Christ, to take people who think differently to think more like Him. And I pray He uses this message to help us think and live different.

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- <sup>1</sup> Brian Borgman, “The Theater of God’s Glory,” sermon on Ephesians 3:10, [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)
- <sup>2</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, “Bearing the Image,” 2008 General Session at Together for the Gospel Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, [www.t4g.org](http://www.t4g.org)
- <sup>3</sup> Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600-2000* (Cambridge Press, 2006), p. 25, 145, 167.
- <sup>4</sup> *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary*, Vol. 2, p. 2400.
- <sup>5</sup> *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed., 2004.
- <sup>6</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*.
- <sup>7</sup> Arthur Keith, *Evolution and Ethics*, 1947, p. 230.
- <sup>8</sup> Ken Ham, *One Race, One Blood: A Biblical Answer to Racism* (Master Books, 2007), p. 90.
- <sup>9</sup> “Ota Benga: The Pygmy Put on Display in a Zoo,” in *One Blood* [originally published similarly to above co-authored by Charles Ware; this first edition co-authored by Carl Wieland and Don Batten] (Master Books, 1999), chapter 10.
- <sup>10</sup> John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian* (Crossway, 2001), in Appendix 1, “Is There Such a Thing as Race?”, p. 237.
- <sup>11</sup> Stephen Jay Gould, *Ontogeny and Phylogeny* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 1977), p. 127-28.
- <sup>12</sup> “Biblical Ethics” article in *ESV Study Bible*, p. 2557-58.
- <sup>13</sup> Baucham, *Ibid*.
- <sup>14</sup> Eloise Hiebert Menesis, “Science and the Myth of Biological Race,” in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian*, ed. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro Nieves (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 34.
- <sup>15</sup> Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races*, p. 3, 6-7, 18.
- <sup>16</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary, p. 144-45.
- <sup>17</sup> Thabiti Anyabwile, *Ibid*.