

Sermon Title: He Himself Is Our Peace
Scripture Text: Eph. 2:13-14 (Ephesians #11)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 7-11-21

Let's turn our Bibles to Ephesians Chapter 2, where last week, we began a new paragraph. We finished the part about "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, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9; NASB, and throughout, unless otherwise noted). And now we come to the new paragraph; it runs from Verse 11 through Verse 22, and it begins with a "therefore." So this passage is *directly* connected to the passage about salvation by grace through faith. "Therefore," what are you supposed to be like? That's what this paragraph answers, in part.

You remember the next verse, beyond what I just quoted, is Ephesians 2:10, right before our paragraph: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."

It is very significant that the next verse not only begins with "therefore"—in other words: "Here is what I mean by the kind of things that God wants to do through you"—it also contains the only command in all of the first three chapters of Ephesians. Here's how it goes; the first two words of Verses 11 and following: "Therefore remember"—"Remember" is the command—"Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so-called 'Circumcision,' which is performed in the flesh by human hands—remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world."

The command to us is: "Therefore remember." "Remember" that, especially we as Gentiles need to remember always that apart from Christ, we were *hopeless*—we *are* hopeless, apart from Christ—but through what God did for us, we "have been brought near by the blood of Christ" (vs. 13). So, that word "therefore" connects Verses 11 through 22 directly to "good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." And that has *massive* implications for relations between all the diverse people of the world. Part of the "good works" that God wants to enable us to do—and what He wants to do *through us*—is to make us agents of reconciliation, instruments of peacemaking between individuals *and* between people-groups (see Matt. 5:9).

As I pointed out last time: There is *no* racist division between groups in our world today that is *any worse* than—or that is in any way fundamentally different from—the divide between Jews and Gentiles in the time of Christ (Acts 16:20; 1 Thess. 2:14-16). That's why we traced through the Book of Acts what a *monumental thing it was* that Christ died and rose again, He ascended to the Father, He sent the Holy Spirit, a whole bunch of Jews came to Christ and were saved; and *then*, the Gospel leaped the firebreak and went to *Samaritans*—which the Jews *hated* (Jn. 4:9b), and it was *mutual* (Lk. 9:51-53). And then it leaped another firebreak and it went to the *Gentiles*, where the hatred was *palpable* (Acts 10:28; 11:3), and even longer-lasting than the hatred with the Samaritans—*and God brought them together in Christ!* And then, God brought the Apostle Paul to be an Apostle *especially* dedicated to spreading the Gospel among the Gentiles (Gal. 2:7-8); and he *always* went to the Jews first, brought the Gospel to them, then took it to the Gentiles, and brought them together as "*one body* in Christ" (Rom. 12:5). That is His plan.

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Part of the "good works" that God wants us to do is to *be part of that!* (Prov. 12:20b) Think back to that litany of things that we are supposed to remember. Remember: In the eyes of the Jews, we were without respect—we were looked down upon; we were without Christ—we weren't even realizing that we *needed* a Savior, we were just poking around in the dark (Titus 3:3); we were without a spiritual state—we were alienated "from the commonwealth of Israel," and that was the nation through which God was working (Jn. 4:22); we were without promise—we were not connected to the covenants, like the Jews were (Rom. 9:4); we were without hope—we could have *no confidence whatsoever* in any kind of a beneficent future with God, it wasn't possible (Jn. 8:24); we were "without God in the world"—even though the Gentiles have *countless* "gods" (1 Cor. 8:5), *none of them* bring a solution to the sin problem, *none of them* bring reconciliation to God, *none of them* can truly bring diverse people—*warring* people—together. So, please obey that solitary commandment—"Remember" this—as we move on.

All of these problems are resolved in Christ. The transformation that comes to you when you come to faith in Christ—it's *miraculous!* It changes *everything!* It makes you a whole "new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Deut. 30:6; Jer. 24:7; 31:33; Ezek. 36:27; Rom. 7:22). It allows you "fellowship" with God (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; 1 Jn. 1:3, 7). It makes you an essential member of a body comprised of *all who believe* (1 Cor. 12:13)—including people with whom you would have had nothing to do, apart from Christ.

Remember how Paul poked fun at the pride of the Jews, in those verses there that we just read about their pride over the symbolic ritual of circumcision, and Paul emphasized that that's just something that is "performed in the flesh by human hands"—but in Christ there is something *infinitely* better than that! Colossians Chapter 2, Verse 11, puts it this way: "And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands"—a miraculous one—"in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." (cf. Rom. 2:28-29) There is no basis for pride of what we have in this group that that group doesn't have.

Also, being the nation of Israel—the ones that God chose—that was another point of pride for the Jews. The psalmist praised God for restoring Israel to the Land after the Captivity in these words in Psalm 147, Verses 19 and 20—"He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise the Lord!" (cf. Rom. 3:1-2) Now, the *problem* is that, that humble reason to rejoice for God's goodness to them was turned into a point of pride and a reason for looking down on the Gentiles (cf. 1 Cor. 4:7).

So the reason that I'm slowing down through this part of Ephesians 2 is because I want to help us all see that what God has done in bringing first Jews and Gentiles together in Christ—that is *the same thing* which is the solution to the *flaming-hot* racial divisions in our world today. My friends, *we have the answer*, and it's the *only* answer that works! And I want to help you see that the Gospel *is* the solution that we need; and it isn't that we need to *add to it*, it's just that we need to *understand it* and *live it* and *apply it* faithfully, across the board. I also want you to be able to recognize *why* all of the other solutions that are proposed for dealing with racism—*they won't work*.

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And worse than that, when you bring *those things* into the fellowship of the saints, and you mix them with the Gospel, you *negate the effect of the Gospel!* I'll show you a little bit of what I mean about that, before we leave today.

All this flows from this passage, and we'll go *a little bit further* today. The title is: "He Himself Is Our Peace"—that's right from the text. Two points, two verses: Number 1—You Have Been Brought Near, Verse 13. And Number 2—The Barrier Is Broken, Verse 14.

Last week, we just sniffed at Verse 13. Let's take another look at it. Paul says: "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." There's a great contrast here, and it's the second one in this chapter. Remember, this chapter started out with: "You were dead in your trespasses and sins" (vs. 1); and then, the contrast: "But God...made us alive together with Christ" (vss. 4-5). Here's another one: "Formerly" (vs. 11) you "were far off"—you were alienated—"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near" (vs. 13).

The Old Testament concept behind this verse was based on the fact that God manifested His glory in the Tabernacle, and eventually in the Temple in Jerusalem—in that place. Therefore, the Jews could say *they* were "near" and the Gentiles were "far off." The Gentiles couldn't even *come in* to the inner part of the temple, even if they wanted to (see Acts 21:28). So they were "far off"—adrift in the sea of their sin (1 Pet. 4:3), without so much as a paddle, let alone a lifeboat. Hopeless—all of those things that he described in Verses 11 and 12.

So Paul now is writing to Gentiles who have come to faith in Christ, and he's reminding us how we were *far away* from God—totally lost, unsaved in our former position. And now, we "have been brought" near and saved by the same means as anyone else—by "the blood of Christ" (vs. 13; cf. Acts 15:11; Rom. 3:30). The possibility of Jews and Gentiles enjoying uninhibited spiritual fellowship and mutually serving God together—that is one hundred percent contingent upon being brought together and "brought near by the blood of Christ." Jews had to be saved, too (Heb. 9:15). But all who come to Christ are "in Christ," and "in Christ" all these divisions fade away (Gal. 3:28).

Now, let's break a bit of new ground. You Have Been Brought Near—Verse 13. And now, Verse 14: The Barrier Is Down. At Verse 14, we arrive at another one of Paul's exquisite, complicated sentences; this one isn't as long as the earlier one in Chapter 2, and it's nowhere near as long as the big one in Chapter 1, but this explains the significance with respect to the relationship between Jew and Gentile. We are not going to finish the whole thing today, but I want to read the whole sentence to you so you can see the majesty of it. Chapter 2, Verses 14 through 16: "For He Himself is our peace"—that would make a good sermon title—"who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity." That is nothing short of *spectacular!* Jesus brought peace where no one else and nothing else ever could.

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It's described negatively, and it's also described positively. Negatively: He "broke down the barrier"—knocked down something. And then, He "abolish[ed]...the enmity." That's the fancy word for "hatred" and "hostility." And then, look at the positive things: He "made both groups into one"; He "establish[ed] peace"; and He "reconcil[e]d them both."

Obviously, "peace" is a key word here. "Peace" is the translation of the Greek word that means: "a status of favorable circumstances involving peace and tranquility." If you know anyone named Irene, let her know that her name is "peace." When we say we have an "irenic" conversation, we're having a conversation of "peace" together. That's the Greek word *eirēnē*, anglicized. According to the Louw-Nida Lexicon, the meaning of "peace" is sometimes expressed in a negative form in other languages, like: "to be without trouble," or, "to have no worries," or, "to sit down in one's heart"—as if you're at rest...kind of like what Jesus said: "Come to Me...and I will give you rest...for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). "To make peace" also means "to join together those who have been separated."

Paul used a marvelous word-picture here, and you have to think about it: "The barrier of the dividing wall" has a very specific historical reference; it refers to the wall that separated the "Court of the Gentiles" from the "Holy Place" within the Temple.

If you see a picture of the Jewish Temple, what it was probably like in that time, you see all this *huge* facility: The Temple Mount is a 1,000-foot by 2,000-foot rectangle—colonnades all around, majestic steps leading up to it. And when you get to the top of those steps and you enter inside those walls, you're in the "Outer Court"—*big*, big place; a lot of people could come there.

It was often called "The Court of the Gentiles" because a Gentile could come that far; not very many *wanted to*, but like we saw last week: the Ethiopian Eunuch and some others who had come to believe in Yahweh—they had rejected the false gods, and they had come to believe in the one true God—they could come in that far, but *inside* that area was the "Holy Place," the inner part of the Temple. Inside the *inner* part was that little ten-by-ten-foot area called "The Holy of Holies" (Ex. 26:33), and inside *that* was the Ark of the Covenant; that was the area that was covered by that veil, and *no one* could go past that veil except the High Priest one day a year, on the Day of Atonement (Heb. 9:7), after a *huge* succession of *exactly* the right sacrifices for *all* the right things, and it would be done *all* at the right time (Lev. 16:29-34; 23:26-32).

But if you came into that Outer Court of the Gentiles, and you came up to the entrance to the "Holy Place," there was a sign there. It read: "No Gentile may enter within the barricade which surrounds the Sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." It was a *literal* "barrier"; it was "the dividing wall." That *literal* barrier, in Paul's terminology here, symbolizes *all* the barriers of hatred that separated Jews from Gentiles. Now, there is *an element of truth* in what is on that sign. There is an element of legitimacy to it because the holiness of God required the "Holy Place" to be *holy*—set apart from everything else. But in the inevitable playing out of human depravity, what started out as appropriate zeal for defending the holiness of God degraded into hatred between alienated groups.

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Remember back to what we said last week in-depth about the ingrained hatred between Jews and Gentiles. That was *even worse* than between Jews and Samaritans. It was *centuries old*, it was mutual—and *neither side* was having committee meetings to decide how to make peace with the other side! It was just ingrained hatred and rejection. But now, we Gentiles "have been brought near."

If you read from Verse 13 into the beginning of Verse 14, notice how it says this: "But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off *have been brought near*"—that is a perfect tense; it's *done*—"you...have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace." He's describing the results of Christ making peace by viewing it from the standpoint of Gentiles being allowed into the Holy Place—the part of the Temple that was reserved for Jews. That's a wonderful word-picture, although I don't think it actually ever *happened* in the Temple before it was destroyed—except when the Temple was *defiled* by Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 11:31); and it will be similarly defiled by the Antichrist (Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:4); and of course, it was all destroyed by the Romans. But in actually coming to worship...well, the unbelieving Jews still controlled the Temple, even after Jesus rose again, and that sign didn't get taken down. But this is a way of describing that Jews and Gentiles *accept one another* in Christ.

But would you notice the *profound* way that it describes Jesus: He made "peace," but it's more than that. He didn't make peace in the sense that He didn't negotiate a mutual ceasefire agreement; he didn't negotiate a treaty; He didn't oversee a mediated settlement where both sides give a little; He didn't do arbitration, and decide that one side wins and one side loses. He *took away* what separated Jew and Gentile! He not only *made* peace, Jesus "Himself is our peace" (vs. 14; cf. Col. 3:4; 1 Tim. 1:1). If you don't have Jesus, you don't have peace! You *may* have relatively less war and strife in your life than some others have, but you don't really have peace because there is no real peace, other than in Christ (see Is. 48:22; Rom. 5:1).

There's another dramatic picture of the significance of the death of Christ, also referring to the Temple; it came from the final moments that He was on the Cross. It's in Matthew 27, Verses 50 and 51—"And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice"—that was probably when He said, "It is finished!" (Jn. 19:30)—"and yielded up His spirit"—that's when He gave His life. "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom."

The "veil of the temple"—that's what separated the ten-by-ten "holy of holies" from the rest of "the holy place" (Ex. 26:33; cf. Heb. 9:3), and from the rest of the world. That veil prevented *anyone* from barging in on the presence of God (Jer. 30:21b). Now, that was *not* a shower curtain; that was not a bedsheet; it was a *big deal*. Go back and read in Exodus and Leviticus—find out how that veil was made (Ex. 26:31-35; 36:35-36; 39:34; 40:3, 21, 26-27; Lev. 16:2; 24:3; Num. 4:5); it was quite the deal. And it was "torn in two" by God, miraculously—*ripped* from top to bottom to symbolize that, with the death of Christ, God now has made a way for man to come into His presence (Heb. 7:25; 10:19-22)—not by going to Jerusalem and going to a temple; the Temple *isn't even there anymore*—but coming into the presence of God by faith, we are spiritually united with Him (Rom. 7:4), just like we are united to each other (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:25).

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It has struck me, as I have read that passage many times: I would *love* to be able to see the look on the faces of the priests who were busy in the Temple *the moment that veil tore*—"What's that ripping sound?"—and they would *see it* being "torn in two from top to bottom," and *there were no hands on it!* They must have been absolutely *terrified*, because you know what happened when you went behind that veil unauthorized!

Read about it in Leviticus Chapter 10: Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. On the day that the worship in the Tabernacle in the wilderness was inaugurated, God sent fire from heaven that *consumed* the sacrifice on the altar, showing His pleasure with it—and then, they decided to wing it; "That was pretty cool. We're going to do it again!" And they pulled back that veil, and that very same fire from Heaven *incinerated them on the spot in front of everyone!* God *cares* about His holiness!

What would they have been thinking? I don't know what those priests who heard it ripping were thinking. I do know they probably put it back up pretty hastily. But the death of Jesus Christ means that *anyone of any* "tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9) can come into the presence of God by faith in Christ (Heb. 4:16). *God* opened that curtain! God opened it, and we have "access" (Eph. 3:12).

Now, Christ Himself not only *makes* peace, He "*is* our peace." We don't come by way of earthly priests and animal sacrifices (1 Tim. 2:5), through a "temple made with hands" (Mk. 14:58).

Let me show you another way that Paul described this *astounding* aspect of the work of Christ. Here's something that he wrote to another church in the same region as Ephesus—the Roman province of "Asia" (Acts 19:10, 26; 20:16, 18). And he wrote to them about the same time. We know it as Colossians Chapter 3, Verses 9 through 11.

Listen to what he says: "Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him—a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." If you *don't believe that*, and you call yourself a Christian, *you are deceiving yourself!* You're *lying* about what Christianity really is! It *knocks down* all those barriers! Christ *is* not only the way that "we have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1), He is the way that we solve racial division and strife.

So as I said, I'm going to move slowly through this passage, because we need to think carefully about how it applies to the current events in the *highly-charged culture* in which we find ourselves.

I don't know if you have heard any headlines to this effect, but I'll get you caught up if you don't know it: Racism is a big deal these days—some *awful things* being done and said that are racist. Well, any way of dealing with racism that gives credence to the concept of racism is anti-godly. We can't start with an unbiblical presupposition! There is *one race*—it is the *human* race (see Gen. 3:20; Acts 17:26).

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Within the "human" race, there *are* some groups that tend to have outward appearance characteristics, but *one of them* is the amount of melanin that a person has in their skin. Melanin is the substance that determines how light or how dark your skin is. Just about everybody in this room is *seriously* melanin-challenged! Normal? Probably what Adam looked like would be somewhere in the realm that *we* would probably call "brown." Some people are especially blessed with *plenty* of melanin.

And, my friends: We are *all equal* as the image-bearers of God! (Gen. 1:26-27) *No one* comes to God by any way different than anybody else! (Rev. 5:9) No one is more lost than anybody else, based upon their skin tone. *There are not different colors of people!* There are different *shades* of coloration among people. You can go back and listen to our sermon from August 9th of 2020 on Genesis Chapter 10, if you have *even the slightest doubt* about that! (see Acts 17:26)

Any person who treats *any* other person in *any* way differently because of the shade of coloration of their skin is committing the sin of racism—and in *every case*, that is blatantly Satanic! The idea of different races comes from Satan, *not from God*, not from His creation! And if the Bible means what the Bible says—and *it does*—that's the truth: There is *one race*. But *we* are awash in a world *full of* racist attitudes and slogans and actions! It's all over the world—it isn't *just* in America. But, my beloved ones, *we have the answer!* It is the Gospel.

But there are things that are being propagated these days, and they are coming into churches; they are *undermining* the Gospel *in the name of*—with the motive of—wanting to "right the wrongs of racism." Now, I will not ever pretend that I can judge the motives of someone who hates racism, and wants to try to fix it. I'm not here to talk about motives, but I'm here to talk about *the truth*. The general label under which these things are being propagated is the "Social Justice Movement." We talked about that a little bit last summer, as well.

We need to do some careful, biblically-accurate thinking about all of this. And if you don't know it already, I will warn you that in our current cultural climate, *just having conversations* about these things is often like playing hopscotch in a minefield! It's *very easy* to trigger explosive responses. Let's make sure that *we* are not the ones who explode (2 Tim. 2:25). We have *the truth*. We have Christ, "who *is* our peace." We can speak "truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), and patiently (1 Thess. 5:14).

Now, here's my big venture for this week: I'm going to propose a new term which can be the umbrella under which we address these issues as precisely as possible. Now, please, *at least* let me get home today before you tell me somebody else already thought of this term; but I want credit for it now, because *I* thought of it *Tuesday!* My new term is: "The Sufficiency of the Gospel." Now, you know we're already committed to the sufficiency of Scripture. By that, we mean that the Bible truly contains all that we need for "life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We similarly know what we mean by the sufficiency of Christ, in that He is the one and only Savior who is "the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2).

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When I say "The Sufficiency of the Gospel," I say that's a *corollary* of those two statements. It means that the Gospel is *the sufficient and only true solution* to racism! (see Jn. 10:16) It solves it at the *core*, which is the human "heart" (Jer. 17:9; Matt. 15:19). Other things which may help modify behavior in a way that may somewhat ameliorate outbursts of anger—well, I'm all for *anything* that gets people to not shoot each other and kill each other and not have anything to do with each other. But the *solution* is the Gospel, and the reason that I'm using this term is that there is a system of thinking—and it's *flooding* into Christian circles—which says that the Gospel...it's *good*, and the Gospel is what you need to know in order to have forgiveness for sins and to get to Heaven, but the Gospel is *not enough* to bring about reconciliation. So let's say it clearly: The kind of racism in our nation and around the world these days *is not* beyond the power and the reach of the Gospel. We either believe that the Gospel is "the power of God for salvation" (Rom. 1:16) and Scripture is sufficient, or *we don't*. And if we don't believe that, *we're not practicing Christianity*, whatever it is that we're doing! (Jn. 8:47)

There have been, and there continues to be, *horrendous* things committed because of racist attitudes; and we need to call them what they are! If you think the motive is because of somebody's skin color, or which side of the tracks they live on, or what school they went to, or what country they were born in—I don't care what you think the reason is, or what motivates the action; we need to call these things what they are! Sometimes it's *murder*. Sometimes it's slander. Sometimes it's assault. Sometimes it's dishonesty. *Always* it is the "sin" of "partiality" (Jas. 2:9; cf. Jb. 34:19; Acts 10:34-35). Remember, I pointed out that word to you last week. It's that wonderful Greek word that literally means "to receive a face." It means dealing with people differently from other people on the basis of how they look, or how they dress, or where they were born, or what language they speak. (cf. 1 Sam. 16:7)

As we talk about the sufficiency of the Gospel for addressing racism, we need to be clear that the reconciliation between people—*which is part of the Gospel*—is genuine and total and complete! Christ "*is our peace*." He "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall." He is the "once for all" sacrifice for all sin for all time (1 Pet. 3:18), *and that includes* the sin of racism in *all of its manifestations*!

Therefore, it is a *huge problem* when there are authorities, authors, preachers, government leaders—*whole movements* these days—that say that we have to do *more* to atone for our sins than what Christ accomplished on the Cross (Heb. 10:14). The Gospel is that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The Gospel is *not* First Corinthians 15: 3-4 *plus* "racial reconciliation"! It *includes* "racial reconciliation" in "Christ" who "is our peace."

It is *imperative*, my friends, that as ambassadors of "the Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6), we are also "peacemakers" (Matt. 5:9). We should never deal with any person differently than any other person, based upon skin tone. We should also never turn a blind eye when we see that being done! We have to call it what it is! (see Prov. 31:9; Is. 1:17).

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When someone is attacked, when their stuff is taken, when their character is besmirched *simply because of the color of their skin*, that's awful! That's *sinful*! Christ died for that! We need to bring those people to account to the Gospel of Jesus Christ! (Mk. 1:15; Acts 26:20) That's our message, because that is the only thing that solves the problem!

We should willingly take the time that is necessary to listen to and to learn from people who have been mistreated because of racist attitudes. *We dare not turn a blind eye!* (Prov. 24:12) And, in a melanin-challenged group like this, you may not understand what some people have gone through, who have been persecuted because of their skin color. It's our responsibility to be peacemakers—to be uniters. We need to understand. We need to show compassion. *We need to treat people without partiality. But don't add to the Gospel!* (see Ecc. 3:14)

Now, there are, in our world, well-meaning efforts to help Christians recognize racism and deal with its horrible consequences. As I say, I would not pretend to judge the motivations of anybody who does that. But I'm going to *shout from the housetops* when I hear things which either corrupt the Gospel, or attack the sufficiency of the Gospel.

Now, we're short on time. I've got to muck through this for another couple of weeks, probably, to finish this paragraph. It's okay. I'll try to help you understand it, and some ways to apply it.

But while we're so short on time today, I'm going to wrap it up with a short list of things to watch out for. These are things that are coming into the Church. I have heard *Christians* say these things! I have read things that Christians have written, many times, which say these things. They're coming into the Church, and they represent a *thoroughly anti-biblical worldview*, and we must *never* allow them to be promoted *within* the Church (cf. Acts 20:30; 1 Tim. 1:3-4). I think there are five things to watch out for; these are buzz-phrases, if you will.

First of all: The very idea that "race" is a valid concept. The only thing wrong with it is that it is *flat out not true!* (see Gen. 3:20; Acts 17:26; Rev. 5:9) Anyone who believes there are different "races" of people based on skin color *does not believe the Word of God*, and *does not understand the Gospel!* It is *not so!* Every discussion that begins with *granting* the false premise that there are multiple races *has to be rejected!* It's *not Christian!* It's *not Biblical!* You cannot accept an anti-biblical premise as your foundation, and then build a building on it that isn't going to crumble! There are no "races"—there is *one race*—and it is "human" (cf. Titus 3:4).

Here's another one: All white people are racist, *even if they don't know it.* That is simply *a lie!* It denies—well, let's invent a phrase—it denies "the sufficiency of the Gospel," because it makes a categorical statement of *ongoing sin* on the part of people because of *their* lack of skin color, *not* because of their thoughts, their motives, their words, or their deeds. You can't make a categorical statement. Turn that around! What if you said: "All brown people are racists, even if they don't notice"? How can it be that it's only in one case? It's not true!

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Here's another one: All white people are oppressors. This comes from the basic Marxist attitude that everyone in the world falls into one of two categories: You are either oppressed, or you are an oppressor. And there is the mindset of a presupposition considered to be impossible to ever be challenged: All white people are oppressors.

Now, if that's the case—*and it's not*—then you will have to go to some of the children in *this church*, and you will have to try to convince them that their father or their mother, depending on the combination of skin shades in the home, *is evil*. Are you going to say that? That is *so obviously, patently* wrong! Not *all of everything* is *anything*! It is *individuals* who sin! "Christ...died for sins" of *individuals* (Acts 3:26; Rev. 20:13).

I just got a picture this morning of a former member of Heritage Bible Church. Monica went to English Camp in Russia. She met Caleb, who is from Ghana, who is finishing up his work to be a doctor in Tambov. They started a long-distance relationship, and they just got married. Now, do you want to sit down with them and tell Caleb that his sweet wife is his *oppressor*? *This doesn't work!* And you can't just *spit out* something like that, that's so *utterly absurd*, and make it stick!

Here's another one: People must make restitution for the sins of their ancestors. If *any* of your ancestors *ever* owned a slave, by golly, we need to quintuple your taxes and pay somebody who is a descendent of slaves! I understand the sentiment...The problem is: *It completely contradicts what God says!*

Like, for example, Ezekiel 18:20—"The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself" (cf. Deut. 24:16; Jer. 31:30). You are responsible for *your* sins—not the sins of your children, not the sins of your parents and grandparents. (cf. Prov. 11:5b; 14:32a)

That thought of making restitution for the sins of ancestors—it denies the sufficiency of the Gospel because it denies that Christ made *complete* propitiation for sin! It's saying: "*You have to do more!*" You know, I know a group that says that. They're a pretty big organization. They have a headquarters in Rome. And they say that after you die, even if you're trusting in Christ, you have to go and spend a few hundred years in a place called Purgatory, to continue to pay for your sins (contra Heb. 10:14). And we say: "That's a denial of the Gospel! That's a denial of the sufficiency of Christ!" So is *this* concept!

One more, and I'll quit: Only those who have experienced racial discrimination are qualified to talk about it. Now, my friends, it is true: People who have been victimized by racial sins, racial discrimination—*it scars people*; it *really hurts!* And it happens—and it *still* happens.

And when we encounter someone who has been the victim of this particular sin, they deserve our compassion and our kindness. They should be heard. They should be understood. They should be taken seriously.

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But this concept that *only* those who have experienced that are qualified to *talk about racism* is absurd! Would you say: "No one is qualified to talk about rape unless they've been raped"? Would you say: "No one can talk about assault unless they have been mugged"? Would you say I have no right to say that abortion is wrong, because I have never had one and never paid for one? *Of course not!*

But that statement comes from the world of "Critical Race Theory," the "Social Justice Movement," identity politics—and it's *totally* out of bounds from the Biblical Doctrine of Man—Biblical Anthropology.

Now, there's one more thing that might pop up. I know you might think of it, because as I was reviewing my own sermon this morning before I came to Church, *I* thought of it. What about people who profess to be Christians who *are* racist? You know, that has happened. There are *whole denominations*—some of them have the word "Baptist" in their name, and they have regional adjectives in front of it. You know what? They had a big skirmish about owning slaves, or not owning slaves! The *whole country* got sucked into *that one!* There was a skirmish back around 1861 to 1865. Some Christians took some *very* anti-biblical positions on that.

So, what do you say about a Christian who is a racist? Scott can tell you about meeting leaders in a church who have said: "Well, that's why a white person should never marry a black person—because they are different kinds." He has heard that *in the leadership* of a Bible-believing church!

What do you say about somebody like that? Well, I don't have to make up anything to say; the Apostle Paul already did: Titus Chapter 1, Verse 16—"They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed." (cf. Matt. 7:21; 1 Jn. 1:6) Because the *answer* is Christ, who "is our peace."

Now, we're not done! There are more wrinkles to the application of this. There is more to be said in this paragraph. And we will continue next time, Lord willing.

Our Father, how we thank You for our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our peace. Thank You that He "broke down the barrier," the partition; that He has made the two into one—He has made all of us into one, in Christ. O Lord, help us to grasp the significance of that, and help us to live in the understanding of the reality and the profundity of it all. Help us to be peacemakers. Help us to speak truth in love, speaking the Gospel in every corner, practicing it in every relationship. Have Your way with us to that end, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.