

Sermon Title: Fellow Citizens Of God's Household  
Scripture Text: Eph. 2:19-22 (Ephesians #13)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 7-25-21

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As we began the Book of Ephesians a few months back, I was looking forward through the book—How are we going to approach it, and how are we going to do it?—and I decided that when we got to this paragraph, in Ephesians Chapter 2, Verses 11 through 22, that I wasn't going to spend just one message on it, but that I would take two, because I wanted to take a little extra time to talk about some applications from this passage that are very much appropriate for the current situation in our society; and then it became three, and today is Number Four.

We are going to finish Ephesians Chapter 2 this morning, but we are doing it in a little bit different way. I want to give you an overview of this paragraph—Verses 11 through 22—and then major on some more important commentary on the way things are in our world, and what we should do about it.

Paul uses the union of Jews and Gentiles being brought together in Christ to teach us about the extent of the Gospel—I've called it "The Sufficiency of the Gospel." It can accomplish what *nothing else* can! (see Rom. 1:16)

And the truth is that what has brought Jew and Gentile together "in Christ" *is the pattern* for the solution to *all* racial division in our world! (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11; Rev. 5:9) There are *no* two groups in the world today that hate each other more than Jews and Gentiles did, and it is amazing—it is *astounding*—to actually see that resolved. This *is* the answer! Sadly, most people *don't want* the solution that *God* offers.

As we have nibbled our way through this little paragraph so far, we've tried to help you understand how we need to *apply* this, and how we need to stand firmly on the sufficiency of the Gospel, and keep our guard up against letting nonbiblical ideas built on a secular worldview work their way into the Church (1 Tim. 6:20-21).

Next time we come back to Ephesians, it will be at the beginning of Chapter 3, and we'll do it in our normal style; but I want to continue the pattern for today.

So, here is the overview of Ephesians 2:11-22: We've already seen Our Position Before Christ—that's Verses 11 and 12; and then the second part is: Our Position *In* Christ—Verses 13 through 18; and this morning, I'm just going to introduce you to the third part: Our Position With One Another, which is Verses 19 through 22.

Now remember: This is framed against the backdrop of the centuries-old *hot hatred* of Jews toward Gentiles (1 Thess. 2:14-16), and Gentiles toward Jews (Acts 18:17). Have you ever heard of the concept of "antisemitism"? Well, that is a form of racism. Why do so many people hate the Jews? You can come up with a whole bunch of reasons for that (e.g., Rev. 12:13).

So we've taken the time to survey some of the things that are here. We looked at the backdrop of what was accomplished in the generation of the Apostles, as recorded in the Book of Acts; and we're going to try to make more application, and do a little more analysis today.

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We started out with Our Position Before Christ. This passage begins with the word "therefore," and Verse 11 follows Verse 10—even in the English Bible—and Verse 10 says: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Therefore remember"—remember what? Well, he's going to use this illustration: Jews and Gentiles—"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" (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). Our Former Position Before Christ—well, it wasn't good; we were described as "far off" (vs. 13), because we did not have "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), as did the Jews.

Now: Our Position *In* Christ. Look at the contrast: "Formerly" (vs. 11) that's how you were; now, look how the *next* verse begins—Verse 13 through Verse 18—"But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, 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. And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father." It doesn't matter which side of which racial division you were on; the *answer* is: He "preached peace" to those "who were near" and to those "who were far away."

I'm sure you know that your opinions and your convictions and your experiences are *all right*—they're *correct*, they're *true*—so *everybody else* is "far off," and they feel *exactly that way* about you, on the other side of whatever the division is. The Gospel is the *same Gospel* to *both sides*! (Acts 15:11) He "preached" to those "who were near" and to those "who were far away."

But notice how Verse 13 begins with that "but now." Verse 11 said "formerly" here's how it was, "But now in Christ Jesus..." Jesus "broke down" all of the factors that comprised what He summarizes here as "the barrier of the dividing wall" (vs. 14). So, here are some of the catch-phrases that are in this passage: "He Himself is our peace" (vs. 14); He "made both groups into one" (vs. 14); He "establish[ed] peace" (vs. 15). He "reconcil[e]d them both in one body to God" (vs. 16).

It was at that point of our study that I recommended we coin the new term: "The Sufficiency of the Gospel." Not a profoundly new idea; but what we're trying to say is: The Gospel *is* the sufficient answer to the divisions!

Well, now to the final portion of this paragraph. We're just going to mention a little bit of it today; I'm going to plant a couple of seeds that we will water, and then harvest the produce later, as we move through the Book of Ephesians.

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But we come now to Our Position With One Another. And this explains, among other things, the results of *applying* the principle of the Sufficiency of the Gospel to a rift which was as spectacular and enduring as the divide between Jews and Gentiles.

Verses 19 through 22—"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." Now, notice how *that* segment begins: "So then..." Look at the big picture: Verse 11—"Formerly" you were "far off." Verse 13—"But now in Christ Jesus you...have been brought near." Verse 19—"So then you...are fellow citizens...of God's household."

And now, Paul uses some different metaphors to describe who we are in Christ; there are a lot of different ways of viewing it, and right here he uses three metaphors: He refers to us as a kingdom; we are "no longer strangers and aliens"—now we are "fellow citizens" of God's kingdom! (cf. Phil. 3:20) Think Colossians Chapter 1, Verse 13—"You have been rescued...from the domain of darkness, and transferred...to the kingdom of His beloved Son." We are *all* part of the kingdom (Rev. 1:6; 5:10); we all have the same King.

Then, we are also a "household." God is our Father by "adoption" (Eph. 1:5); we are brothers and sisters in Christ, "together" with one another and with Christ—we *truly are* spiritual family (cf. Gal. 6:10).

And then, he says we are a "building". Christ is "the corner stone." Now, that's not a term that we use a lot; we think maybe of a ceremonial thing—on the corner of a building, there might be a plaque with what year it was built or something—but in ancient construction, the cornerstone was *very* significant: The cornerstone is the stone that would be made to *exacting* dimensions and shape, and set first before all other parts of the building, and everything else was measured in relation to the "corner stone" (Matt. 21:42; 1 Pet. 2:6-7). That stone determined the size and the shape and the support of the whole building. "Christ" is our "corner stone"; "the apostles and prophets" are "the foundation." All the other stones were adjusted in relationship to it.

Now, I want you to prepare to be enthralled. I'm going to tell you something that is so super-duper exciting, I can hardly stand it! In Verses 19 through 22, there are *three* Greek participles *dangling* from the phrase "you are"! Is that *mindboggling*, or what? Now, there are about five people in the room who might have an idea what a Greek participle is and how it works—it's one of the most elegant things of the New Testament Greek language. The excitement is not in the grammar; the excitement is in what the grammar means: "*You are...fellow citizens.*"

Now, here are the three participles: "*Having been built* on the foundation"—that means this is a once-for-all transformation; it's *one* foundation: "*You are...built on the foundation...*" The tense is perfect: It's done, it's settled, it's fixed—that's who you are in Christ (cf. Heb. 9:12; 10:10, 14; 1 Pet. 3:18).

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The next participle is: "being fitted together"—that's describing the never-ending work of the Lord in making all the *pieces* of the Body of Christ fit together and grow together.

The third participle is: "are being built together"—another description of the never-ending work of the Lord in making His Church into what He intends it to be.

Now, there are other metaphors for the Church; we will see more of them as we move through Ephesians. There is one that is *especially* unique—the idea that we are like a "body" (e.g., Rom. 12:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:12-13; Col. 1:18, etc.)—but *all of these things*, as they are grammatically described, are all passive voice, which means: We don't do it! We *receive* it. This is the work of the Lord! *He* is making us into what He wants us to be.

And all three metaphors—the kingdom, the household, and the building—they contain the common elements of continual growth, and us being God's dwelling place. God's dwelling place is no longer confined to the Holy Place in the Temple in Jerusalem; it's not tied to a geographical place; it's tied to people who are in covenant relationship with Him by faith in Christ.

I'm going to come back to *all* of that stuff, and we are going to draw from it later. We will need it as we move into Chapter 3 and beyond. But I saved the majority of our time today to give you one final blast of application specially-focused on current events.

Maybe you've noticed: Racism is a problem. It's a *huge* problem in our world. We *didn't fix it all* when we passed the Civil Rights legislation back in the 1960s. If you talk to people who have experienced and/or *are* experiencing the negative effects of racist attitudes, you're likely to hear some things that will make you uncomfortable, and they might provoke you to think about fresh ways to better live as a Christian in the world.

Well, understand: The Gospel is the *only* real solution to racism! And the Gospel is *sufficient* to address racism. Our duty—our responsibility—is to *do it right!* Our goal is to be the kind of people who live this way, and to be the kind of people who *stand for* living this way, where "this way" is: the way that *all people* are treated *equally!*

The time that we have been lingering in Ephesians Chapter 2 and addressing these things is *not to say*: "Well, Christ died; Jew and Gentile are one; we don't need to talk about racism." No, *it's a big deal!* Saying the wrong things in some places can get you into physical trouble. Standing for the wrong things in some places can get your business burned down, can get you fired from your job or denied a job. *This is a big deal!* We are *not* here to say: "Ignore it." We are *not* here to say: "Don't talk about racism." As a matter of fact, *quite the opposite!*

Address racism honestly, openly, in a civil manner, and understand it for what it is. It is a tool of Satan! He invented it (cf. Jn. 8:44b). Don't accept the conflation of certain views of racism with the Gospel. Engage people and talk about it.

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But, for the rest of our time today, I want to try to finish helping you understand that there are approaches to the sin of racism that are being espoused in our culture, and we have to reject them.

I have told the story several times of a long time ago, when our son was about eight; we were on our annual vacation to Colorado, and my older brother—nine years older than me, who is an avowed atheist—was in the region. He stopped by and spent a day or two with us. And he used to really enjoy baiting me with arguments to blow up my worldview, and he picked one of these times to do it. We got into an extended discussion; we didn't do any yelling or screaming, but it was pretty obvious that there was no changing anybody's mind. But what was interesting to me, more than that conversation, was what our eight-year-old son said to me afterward, when we were alone. He said, "Why is Uncle Hal so stupid?" Now, you have to understand: "Uncle Hal" has a PhD. When they sliced up the pie of brains that was allotted to my generation in our family, *he got half*—my other brother and I had to split up the other half, and we're still fighting over that, I think. He's *brilliant!* It *wasn't* that he is stupid.

Now, here's the analogy: These things that are being said about racism *are not* from stupid people! These are the *very best solutions* that people can come up with to a problem, because *they have denied the answer* to the problem before they've asked the questions! (see Jer. 8:9)

That's what my brother does. For example: If I say, "How often do you see a new species come into existence?" his response might be, "Well, it never happened; we've never seen that." "Okay...Well, then, maybe they were all *created* 'after their kind' (Gen. 1:24)?" "Oh, no, no! Just because we haven't *seen* it doesn't mean it hasn't happened; it just took a long time—so we need *billions* of years." "Well, what about the Grand Canyon? What about a great flood?" "That didn't happen." "Well then, *why are there marine fossils on the top of the highest mountains in the world?*" You're going to reject the data—you're going to reject *the proper interpretation of the data*—because of a *worldview*...because you have *ruled out the answer* before you have started considering the question (cf. Rom. 1:18b).

So, please, when you dialogue with people, when you talk with people about things, don't be demeaning; don't be superior. *You have the truth on your side!* As I heard one guy say this week when we watched a video—somebody says, "Well, I don't believe the Bible!" and he says, "Okay, *that's your problem!*" The point is, *it's true!* And you don't have to say that in a nasty kind of a way (Prov. 3:3; Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).

But here is what I want to say: There are these ways of analyzing and confronting racism that are being promulgated in the world, and *they are* wrong; they are founded upon an anti-God worldview; but the *danger* is—and what we can do that nobody else can do—we have to keep these things from trickling into the Church! And they have started trickling into the Church. And now, they're not trickling—*they're flooding* into the Church! So, I want to suggest to you four reasons why these things need to be rejected by Christians. And I'll try to put enough flesh on the bones that you can recognize what we're saying.

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Reason Number 1: These approaches are rooted in an anti-Christian worldview. I talked to you a little bit a year ago about the "Social Justice Movement." Very big deal. That is a political and racial influence geared toward achieving the goal of deconstructing—that's a polite way of saying "tearing down"—the existing power structures of our society. The goals of the "Social Justice Movement" are *not* Biblical justice! Biblical justice is: *everyone being treated equally* (e.g., Deut. 1:17; Prov. 24:23; 1 Tim. 5:21; Jas. 2:1, 9), *everyone being accepted without partiality* (Acts 10:34-35).

The goal of the "Social Justice Movement" is equal *outcomes* for everybody. So they are calling for government mandated, government controlled redistribution of wealth and power. People will deny it, but it is true: The "Social Justice Movement" is taking the principles of Marxism and applying them in a fresh way. *We can't accept that!*

"Critical Race Theory" is another *big* hot-button issue. "Critical Race Theory" is a branch of a broader system called "Critical Theory"—it is applied to race and to several other things—that defines people according to which group or groups they belong to, and analyzes how the social norms and the laws and the educational systems and other influences affect different groups.

Now, there is a certain validity to that. There are some things that need to be called the awful things that they are! I grew up in a little suburb of Los Angeles. I didn't know the Lord in those days; I was actually very young in those days, but I lived there from the time I was three until I moved away to college. And I had no idea in those days that in our little town—I did not find out about this until later; I did not know what the term meant until much later—but in our town, they practiced the principle of "redlining." "Redlining" is simply taking a map, drawing a red line—and you can actually do this with black if you want to, or blue or any other color you want—drawing a line, and all of the lenders agree that they will not give a mortgage to anyone of a certain skin color on a certain side of that line. That's "redlining." That's sin. That's awful. That's wicked. That needs to be called what it is, and it needs to be blown away! And, thank the Lord, *it has been*. So, *understanding* that there are things that are *wrong* in the *application* of laws, the applications of social mores—understanding that those things go on: *That is okay*; that's legitimate.

But, "Critical Race Theory" accepts and is built upon the anti-Biblical concept that there *really are* different "races." And I keep harping on the fact: *there aren't!* (see Acts 17:26) I can tell who around here is of certain *ethnicities*; it's not hard to figure out! They would pick me out of a crowd and say, "You're a white guy!" That's not too hard. I understand what you mean by "white," "black," "brown"—we understand that terminology. But if you *define people* by their identity *in that manner*, you wind up defining *evil* as the actions of *institutions, governments, employers, schools*, and whatever else they might deem to be "oppressive." What's the problem with that? Is oppression a real thing? *Oh, yeah!* Things can be mishandled; people can be mistreated. That's an ever-present reality. But the problem with this theory is that it overlooks and denies that *evil is in every human heart* (Jer. 17:9; Mk. 7:21), and the greatest problem is that people are in *rebellion against God!* (Col. 1:21) Take care of *that* problem, and the other divisions *go away!*

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This teaches people that their problems are primarily due to how they have been *victimized*, and it overlooks and denies the fact that you have to start with understanding: *We are victimizers!* We are the *perpetrators* of sin against Almighty God, our Creator! We have to deal with *that problem*, first and foremost! So, we can't accept the application of things that are the derivatives of anti-Biblical presuppositions.

There's a big flap going on in Idaho, in the legislature; and by the way, this is not limited to Idaho, but we happen to live here. There's a flap going on between the Idaho legislature and groups of teachers: Some legislators are seeking to *ban* the teaching of CRT—"Critical Race Theory"—in schools, and so they have passed laws to that effect. Well, some of the teachers reply, factually: "We don't teach 'Critical Race Theory' in K through 12 *anywhere* in the Idaho public school system." And I believe that. I don't think there's a class named "Critical Race Theory." I don't think that there is a module of curriculum called "Critical Race Theory" that teachers have been ordered to teach in their elementary classes. *It isn't there!* "Critical Race Theory" is taught at the level of law schools and graduate-level sociology kind of stuff.

So it's true: We don't *teach* "Critical Race Theory." But I maintain: That is an evasion. And here's what I mean: I don't need to teach you the physics and the chemistry involved, for you to know how to bake a cake; I can say, "To bake the cake, here's what you do: Put this stuff together, start up the oven, put it in there, leave it there a certain amount of time, take it out, frost it, and give me a piece." I don't have to teach you the chemistry and physics behind that, though *you will be using* a lot of principles of chemistry and physics when you bake that cake!

Similarly: You don't need to teach classes in CRT; but if you're teaching people who to interact with one another, and you're telling them to apply—*mix in*—these things like the "Social Justice Movement," "Identity Politics," "Intersectionality," you're *applying the principles!* So, we're having a *big fight* over the words, and we're talking right past each other and *missing* the essential point. Now, if I *teach you* how to bake a cake and give me a piece, and you go bake the cake and you lace it with marijuana, and you give me a piece—*uh-oh*, we have a problem here! So we have people who are *baking things in* that are problematical.

I've thrown out a couple other terms: "Identity Politics" and "Intersectionality"—those are the terms that describe and define people by the groups they are associated with, not by their essential nature as image-bearers of God.

You have seen "Identity Politics" and "Intersectionality" applied *loudly* in this year, in declarations from our president. He promised, before he was elected—and he has sought diligently to make good on his promises—he promised that he would make sure his Cabinet was the most diverse ever. So, the Number One qualification to be in this Presidential Cabinet is to not be like anybody else in the Presidential Cabinet. We *must* be as diverse as we can. *And* he has appointed people based on their skin color; based upon their homosexual lifestyle; and in one case, based upon the total denial of gender—he appointed and had approved a transgender member of the Presidential Cabinet.

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So, *it doesn't matter* what's right and what's wrong; *it doesn't matter* who is most qualified, who is most experienced, *if you say the highest priority* is to identify color, ethnicity, gender—all of those things.

We *cannot* let *that* kind of thinking come into the Church! (1 Tim. 4:1) The Kingdom of Light (Eph. 5:8) is *never* helped by the efforts of "the domain of darkness" (Col. 1:13; cf. 2 Cor. 6:15). It *doesn't help* to think this way! Every time in all of Church history that anybody has tried to marry the Bible to *any* worldly philosophy or any worldly methodology, the result is always: *the corruption* of the truth! Syncretism *only* harms the Church (1 Cor. 10:21). What is "syncretism"? It's where you take worldly ideas, you put a Christian label on them, and you bring them into the household of God. (cf. Ex. 32:4; Deut. 12:30-31; Jdg. 17:3; 1 Ki. 12:28; Matt.15:9).

But here's a principle; I don't *think* I invented this; if I didn't, I liked it so much when I first thought of it that I *thought* I thought of it. We can say it this way: Diagnose the wrong disease and you won't seek the right cure. If you have cancer of the liver, you don't need to have your ears washed out. You have to diagnose it right.

And this is like what happens when you compromise the Bible with Evolution and billions of years (contra Ex. 20:11), or when you buy into the pragmatism of the "Seeker-Sensitive Movement" (contra 1 Thess. 2:5a). Evangelicals in our generation have an ever-increasing propensity to believe that if we want to reach people, we first have to address what *they think* is the most important need. That's believing the Gospel isn't sufficient! So, we're saying, "Racism is your thing? We have to talk racism!" No, we have to talk the Gospel—and *racism*—but we can't put the proverbial cart before the horse! There is *no way* the Kingdom of Darkness can help the Kingdom of Light!

In our daily e-mails, where we are working through the Gospel of John, in Chapter 6 we got to the part where some people wanted to take Jesus and make Him a king at the coming Passover meal—but they didn't want "King Jesus," they wanted a king who was going to be a political liberator who would do wonderful things for them (Jn. 6:26), and they *really, really liked* Jesus's miracles, and He talked real good; so they wanted Him. And I made the statement there: What they *wanted* and what they *needed* were very different! They were not looking for someone to set them free from their sins.

That's what is going on in the realm of racism and division in our society! What people *want* isn't really what they actually need. What Social-Justice-Movement crusaders want is equal outcomes, and what they need is equality—and those are different; they are *not* the same thing.

Reason Number 2: Another reason we need to reject these things is: These approaches themselves are *inherently* racist! Thomas Sowell made a comment somewhere, and I didn't capture it to quote it to you perfectly, but he says Marxism has a *perfect record* of miserable failure, but now we seem to be thinking it just needs to be put under new management! And there's some truth in that; he's really good at coming up with those one-liners, and I'll give you one later.

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We will *always* have racism as long as we continue to act as if it's valid to identify people according to the level of melanin in their skin! People *are* different colors on the outside, but they're not *different* in reality!

CRT and Identity Politics are locked into defining people as either victims or victimizers, oppressors or oppressed—and that just *overlooks* the fundamental fact: We are *all* "guilty before God" (Rom. 3:19, NKJV). We *all* need His forgiveness and redemption (Rom. 3:23; cf. Jn. 3:36). And we are incapable of achieving that on our own efforts (Gal. 2:16).

*All of that* is in Ephesians Chapter 2! "He came and preached peace to you who were far away," and the *very same* "peace to those who were near" (vs. 17)—*both needed the Gospel*, before they could come together. They *both* could not accomplish it on their own! "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. For we are *His* workmanship, created *in* Christ Jesus for good works, which *God* prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them" (vss. 8-10). That's the introduction to the whole section about settling the rift between Jew and Gentile.

Now, that sounds like a pretty radical statement: These approaches that we don't want to allow into the Church are *inherently* racist. Well, let me give you some support for that. There is a bestselling book now, titled: "How To Be An Antiracist," and the gist of the book is: "It's not enough to *not be* racist; you have to be *Antiracist*...and we'll define that for you." It means applying the principles of Critical Theory, Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and all of that. The author of that book is Dr. Ibram X. Kendi. And by the way: He's not stupid! He *truly believes* what he is saying. He truly believes that he is promoting a right answer. He is a beloved man in the circles of the "Social Justice Movement" and all of that.

But that concept of "antiracism" is, in essence, a new religion that *substitutes* for Christianity. I could take the time to flesh that out, but I won't; I'll suggest something for you to read that will help you understand what that means. But it holds that *all* white people *are racist*, and they need to live a life of repentance and constant efforts toward atoning for their "original sin"—which is racism. In other words: The Gospel is *not* sufficient! That's a big issue!

Now, if you think I'm just setting up "straw men" and knocking them down, let's let Dr. Kendi speak for himself. He says this: "The only remedy to past discrimination is present discrimination. The only remedy to present discrimination is future discrimination." Now, there's a real thought there. He is saying that the solution to racism—it's *not enough* to say: "Don't mistreat people. *Stop* mistreating people. Recognize it for what it is, call it what it is, and stop it." That's not enough. You have to now *switch* the roles, and you have to take those who have been identified as "oppressors" and you have to *tear down* all of their positions of authority, tear down all of their ideas, and make *them* be oppressed by the ones that *you say* they have oppressed. So, we need to *reverse discrimination*. And he's pretty savvy; he realizes that there will come a time when we have to adjust the screen one more time.

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Now, if you follow his logic, he is condemning America to a *perpetually racist future!* So that's why I say: This solution is *racist!* Our goal is equal treatment; that is Biblical justice. Their goal is equal *outcomes.*

If you want to see just how *far off* this thinking is: same book, same guy—I think this was in an interview—he recently said this; Dr. Ibram Kendi: "Even what we *consider* to be violence, even what we *consider* to be crime, is *highly racialized*, and they are historically based on race and power." In other words, he *denies* that you can say, "That's violence!" It's only: We *perceive* what is violence, based upon our racial viewpoint. There is *no such thing* as absolute right and wrong, guilt or innocence, criminal or legal—because it's *all determined by races.*

So, when I say: "We can't accept this," I'm saying: That's *rejecting* the fundamental principle that *God is God, and He is the perfect Lawgiver*—and He has *given us* the "perfect" Law (Ps. 19:7)! We *know* what is right! We *know* what is wrong! When we see something wrong, it needs to be righted—it doesn't just need to be, "Well, let's just change the rules of the fight, so the other guy can get beat up for a few rounds!" That's not the point!

Reason Number 3, not to let these things in: These approaches will not solve the problem. I say that because *you can't solve a sin problem with a government program!*

Now, if you find something that the government is doing that is wrong, it needs to be called "wrong"! Is there any work to be done there? Well, *yeah*—a few *hundred* things. But you can't solve a sin problem by making a law (see Rom. 3:20b). I have an idea: Let's make it illegal to murder people—and that'll solve murder, right? No, it won't.

We need to put an end to unfair applications of laws. Yes, that is true; you can do that. We should, at every opportunity, advocate for righteousness and compassion and generosity, caring for widows and orphans and handicapped people and refugees—we should care for them. *But*, you can't fix racism *from the outside in!* Only Christ can fix it, because it is a sin, and that sin resides in the heart of *every* person. *We have to deal with that first!*

But if you're unwilling to deal with that, and you still want to deal with racism, you have to come up with other things—and *that* is exactly what is going wrong! When you start with a wrong definition of man, and a wrong definition of sin, no amount of hard work is going to get you to the only true answer to racism (cf. Jer. 13:23).

As our passage in Ephesians 2 has taught us: Once a person is reconciled to God in Christ, the "barrier" of division between the "groups" (vs. 14)—it's "broke[n] down"! Nothing but the Gospel can do that. That's why we say the Gospel is sufficient—and it's *the only* sufficient answer!

So, Reason Number 4—a little bit of overlap: These approaches contradict the principle of the sufficiency of Scripture and the sufficiency of the Gospel.

Sermon Title: Fellow Citizens Of God's Household  
Scripture Text: Eph. 2:19-22 (Ephesians #13)

Speaker: Jim Harris  
Date: 7-25-21

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When you talk about racism—and it's a good thing to talk about it—you might feel very uncomfortable; you may hear some things you don't want to hear. You have to sort it out and apply Scripture, turn the conversation toward the Gospel. As you do that, it is vital to listen and learn from people with backgrounds different than yours. Work hard to understand. Be compassionate. Look for ways that you can address a situation, and come alongside and show the love of Christ. Treat people without partiality. But, *do not add to the Gospel!*

Now, there's a big chunk that I cut out, but I'll tell you the punchline: As I have read about this stuff—and I have read lots and lots of stuff—there's one book that is kind of a standout that comes from the "other side," if you will. The motivation is to get people together and talk. And the spirit of the book is good, the motivation is good, the motivation is right; it's well-intended, *but*—it bakes the cake, putting in things *that are not Biblical*—and that's the problem. I'd like to elaborate on that, but we don't have time.

Let me jump to the bottom line here, if you will: It's *easy* to hear stuff like this, and to get riled up about it. We cannot sit by and allow thinking like this to be filtered into the Church. But I want to ask you, please: Don't get "riled up," okay? Keep your "rile" to yourself (cf. Ps. 37:7-8). Use the discipline not to sling around one-liners and soundbites and zingers. Refuse to call names, even when people call you names (1 Pet. 3:9). "Oh yeah, well..." I did that in school; *it didn't work*. And I was always the littlest guy in the fight, so I gave up fighting pretty young.

Don't treat *anyone* in an undignified manner. And I promise you, probably the very worst place in the world to try to carry on these conversations is *anything* to do with social media! This needs to be done in person. We need to talk about these things. I promise you, there is *no chance whatsoever* that you're going to have success in presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ if you begin a conversation by calling somebody a name, or sticking a label on them that they consider offensive. You know, don't start with, "Oh, I *love* to talk about Jesus to Marxists like you!" That's not going to get the door open!

Understand, friends: No one is going to hell for applying the teachings of Marxism. No one is lost because they're homosexual. No one is lost because they're transgender. No one is lost because they're communists. They are all those things *because they're lost!* We have to deal with the *real issue*—the *core issue*, the *ultimate issue!*

We don't try to convert people from worldly and anti-Christian thinking; that's not our goal. We could convert somebody to give up all of these philosophical things that we think are so wrong about approaching the issue of racism—but if we don't convert them from loving their sin to knowing and loving their Savior, we're just going to make them a little less offensive while they go to hell. *That's the issue!*

These dangerous and anti-Biblical ideas that are pouring in on us—they are the products of brilliant minds addressing social ills, but they ruled out the ultimate answer before they began dealing with the questions (cf. Prov. 17:16).

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A pastor of a church in a racially-charged region—Washington, D.C., to be specific—has written several outstanding articles dealing with race. The pastor's name is Jesse Johnson. Scott Basolo knows him fairly well, from going to school with him. You can look him up online; you'll find a lot of his very good articles at "thecripplegate.com"—very good resource. One of his articles is: "Four Distinctives Of A Christian View Of Race." Let me read you a little bit of what Pastor Johnson says:

"We don't pursue 'racial reconciliation' as a goal in and of itself. In fact, 'racial reconciliation' is a very problematic term—it is a mix of an unbiblical concept with a biblical mandate, united by a hyphen. Instead, we understand that as we are united to Christ through faith in the gospel, we are united to each other in the church.

"This union is an ontological reality. Right now, there is unity in the church, because the same Spirit indwells every believer. Whether you go to a multi-ethnic church, a predominately white or black or Filipino church, it doesn't matter: You already are reconciled to God, and those other believers in other churches that don't look like you are already reconciled to the same God as you. You are one with them, whether you like it or not.

"But you should like it, because where there is division in the church, there is sin. Racism in the church would represent a denial of the finished work of Christ on the Cross and a denial of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit."

You might want to look that up and read that whole article, and marinate your mind a little bit in that.

I mentioned the name Thomas Sowell earlier. He is an economist and quite an accomplished commentator on social influences. You can find a whole website or two of Thomas Sowell quotes. He's one of those people who is able to take the big ideas and boil them down to nuggets that people like me can chew on.

Thomas Sowell is 91 years old now. He is a Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He is a black man, born in North Carolina. I don't know how much time you have spent in North Carolina, but if you're not familiar with the divide between black and white, that's a good place to go and find out very quickly what it's all about, and find the long-term results of some *really sinful attitudes*—and some of it on the part of people who profess Christ; we can't ignore that. So he was born in North Carolina, and then he grew up in Harlem, New York. I think this guy is qualified to talk about what it's like to be on the nasty end of racism.

He made this comment; I believe this was when the rioting was going on, this past year. He said this: "Have we reached the ultimate stage of absurdity, where some people are held responsible for things that happened before they were born, while other people are *not* held responsible for what they themselves are doing today?" Look—what was wrong long ago *is wrong now!* And what's going on that's wrong now—well, *it's wrong now*, because it's *always wrong!*

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Alright, I'm done. I quit. *Except...*If I had the power to assign homework, and to require that you turn in to me a book review, I would ask you to please read and report on: "Fault Lines" by Dr. Voddie Baucham—pastor, president of a college in Zambia. He checks all those boxes: Black man raised in a non-Christian environment by a single mom struggling to make ends meet, living in places where racism is rampant. And he calls this book that just came out this year: "Fault Lines." You might remember: We were praying for Voddie; he had a battle with a heart issue. He's back on his feet. I don't think he's a hundred percent back to full strength yet.

I have read a number of books on this stuff. Not a week has gone by in the last couple of years that I haven't read two or five or ten articles from *all* different perspectives on all of this stuff; and in this book, Voddie has synthesized things down to their essence, and he calls it: "Fault Lines." A "fault line" is a crack in the earth's crust; and as pressures change and the earth moves along a "fault line," we have an earthquake—it's a *very* unnerving, upsetting thing. And he makes that analogy: This is what the battle over what to do about racism is doing in our world.

Okay, I'll make you a deal: If you would like to read this book and you can't afford it, just quietly come tell me. I will buy it for you, and I'll give it to you—on *one* condition: You read it, and then you give it to somebody and ask them to read it. Fair enough? If you can get it on your own, that's fine. I don't think Heritage Bible Church can wipe out Amazon's stock in the next few days.

I say that just because: I can't say all of this stuff. I sure wish I could speak as a six-foot-four black man with a foot-long white beard and a voice that can rattle the windows without a microphone. That's Voddie. I'll never talk like that. But I will tell you: This boils down the issues from a Biblical worldview.

*Father, thank You that You have made us "fellow citizens" of Your "household." And Father, we know that we have the answer, in the Gospel—the answer that takes away sin. We thank You that we know: In Christ there is unity. Sometimes in the name of Christ, we may not act like it. So, call us up short where we need to be challenged. Give us grace, mercy, kindness, gentleness in our speech. But above all: Make us good ambassadors of Your Kingdom, that we can go and beg people to be reconciled to You through Jesus Christ. Have Your way with us to Your ends, for Your purposes, in Jesus' name. Amen.*