

Biblical Racial Equality

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Evaluating history can be painful. People, including Christians, sometimes have reached wrong conclusions. They have misused Scripture to support their mistaken beliefs. These beliefs have been passed on to succeeding generations by word and example. Tragically, this has been true regarding racism.

An entry in the Encyclopedia Britannica makes the following poignant statements: "Racism reflects an acceptance of the deepest forms and degrees of divisiveness and carries the implication that differences between groups are so great that they cannot be transcended. Racism elicits hatred and distrust and precludes any attempt to understand its victims."

We may state with conviction that God loves all people, that all people are equal in His sight, and He wants all people to be saved. But it is possible, though we state the preceding principles, to harbor racism in our hearts.

The apostle Paul taught Christians, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ Jesus has forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). How am I treating, both my fellow Christians and all people, if I permit racism to be a part of my mindset?

Attitudes of the past

Brother Wayne Jackson stated, "Many have been racist out of ignorance or weakness. Others, with a more ingrained disposition, have sought to defend it."¹ In speaking of her childhood and background, a dear friend recently told me, "Just because we were not practicing the most extreme forms of racism does not mean we we're not engaged in racist attitudes or have racist perspectives." In years past, associating with people of another race, by and large, did not happen. One demonstration of this attitude was in congregations being characterized by their racial make-up. Each racial group would have their own congregation. I recall hearing of the following incident, which took place in a large congregation in Nashville, Tennessee; probably in the 1950's or early 60's. A Christian, who was an African American, began to enter the meetinghouse of the congregation. But he was forthrightly told he was not welcomed. Unfortunately, this was not an isolated incident. I have read several statements by well-known preachers of previous generations regarding how they viewed and treated African Americans. Their attitudes were shameful, repulsive, and sinful. Sometimes when quotations from these men are cited today, it will be emphasized they were living in a different time. While that is true, it does not excuse their sinful attitude of racism.

The Bible and Racism

From the principles emphasized in the following passages it is very clear that Christianity and racism are not compatible.

Acts 10:34-35 – "Opening his mouth, Peter said, 'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is welcome to him.'" This was a drastic change from the teaching of the Law of Moses. God's chosen people were no longer a certain group of people.

Acts 17:26 – "And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth." All mankind has descended from Adam, the first man. In our Father's sight, all

¹ www.christiancourier.com/articles/146-tragedy-of-racism-the

people are equal. We need to rid of our minds of racial prejudice. This is where overcoming racism begins. All mankind is a part of the human race.

Galatians 3:28- "There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither is there slave or free man there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Accepting that all people were equal in the sight of God was a difficult principle for the early Christians. This verse emphasizes that all distinctions are meaningless in Christianity. Salvation is now equally available to all people.

James 2:1 – "My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. Have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" (Jas. 2:1, 4). While this passage is not dealing with racial distinctions, the principle of treating all people equally is set forth.

Conclusion

Dr. Albert Mohler has correctly expressed regarding racism, "To put the matter plainly, one cannot simultaneously hold to an ideology of racial superiority and rightly present the gospel of Jesus Christ. One cannot hold to racial superiority and simultaneously defend the faith once for all delivered to the saints."²

Racism is not merely a weakness. It is the most extreme version of hatred. These kinds of distinctions are an affront to the impartiality of God. May He help us to examine our hearts and rise above racism.

² albertmohler.com/2015/06/23/the-heresy-of-racial-superiority-confronting-the-past-and-confronting-the-truth/