

“Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all. (Colossians 3:11)

Sometimes there are things going on around us that are so egregious that they need some specific attention, and the racial issues in this country have come to that level of vexation for me.

I want to make two things clear. First, this is not a political issue, it is absolutely a spiritual matter that any church of the Lord Jesus Christ must insure they see and act properly on, in this country particularly. Second, there is a matter for us to consider what we ought to be saying about this issue and how we should address it specifically.

Race is an issue that when viewed spiritually, is a simple one. On Mars hill, Paul said that God

“...hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;” (Acts 17:26)

That is, there is really only one race of people in God's eyes. Let's not put too fine a point on this. In American society, good guys are white, bad guys are black and brown. It isn't more complicated than that. Don't try to gloss this over with overly complex psycho-babble. Racism boils down to people judging other people based on how they look. You can make lots of excuses about how this or that thing isn't racism, trying to cover it up. Be honest and call racist behavior out for what it is – being a respecter of persons and attributing superiority to yourself based upon your skin color. There are racists of every skin color, yes, but we're in America, so I'm going to discuss the American perspective. The American view is and has been from her beginnings that white people are inherently better, and I'll show you a specific example of this later.

Racist views make you a respecter of persons. Racism plain and simple, is a sin.

“But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.” (Jas 2:9)

Before anyone gets upset, I'm not saying I think any of you in the pews today are racists. I'm saying there is a problem in this country that is soaked into its very fabric and we should be careful how we identify with it, and what we say about it. I am suggesting that the identity of this nation makes it something we should carefully examine whether it is in any of our thinking and our behaviors so we may excise the ideas from our very being.

A good example of how something like racism can seep its ways into your thinking is found in Jonathan Edwards. A great theologian, one of the few renowned Americans who has evidences of grace based on what we know of him, but he missed the boat on

slavery and race completely. One of his sons, Jonathan the Lesser, became a well-known abolitionist, but all Jonathan Sr. would do is speak out about the inhumane logistics of the slave trade, not against the trade of human beings itself, ownership of humans or the treatment of them as inferiors, as is directly evidenced by the fact he owned slaves. It is thought he treated them well, but he treated them well in a masterly way, not as equal humans. While you can make the argument that Edwards was more British Aristocracy than American, he was certainly immersed in the early development of this nation, and in my view got it all wrong.

You can look at John Leland's views on slavery to see a similar and perhaps more striking example of how a zeitgeist can penetrate your thinking. In his early years of activity around the Constitution he was stridently anti-slavery, saying Americans should make "use of every legal measure to extirpate this horrible evil from the land" but later in life wrote that slavery itself was in fact "humane, just and benevolent" because blacks weren't on the same level as white men in the creation. I don't think either of these men classified themselves as racists, but they certainly had things wrong.

I am not seeking to condemn brothers Edwards or Leland, but to show that when immersed in a societal fabric, no matter how wrong it may be, it is easy to miss some of the issues that need addressing, especially if you don't take a hard look at yourself sometimes and make sure your thoughts align with scripture on a matter.

The spiritual nature of this discussion fundamentally applies to our not conforming to the world. In this nation, you don't have to burn crosses and wear white hoods to be immersed in a racist mindset. Being a respecter of persons based upon an individual's race can be a very subtle element of your behavior without you possibly realizing it, precisely because it is bound up in the warp and woof of this nation's existence. It is a thing that requires personal introspection. And racial issues are just one example. I believe there are likely dozens of ways Americans think that this analysis can be applied to, but we have this issue staring us in the face on the news every day, and we need to examine it.

To put it directly, this nation was founded on a system of extreme racial inequality. When Thomas Jefferson wrote the words 'We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal', he wrote them from the perspective that non-whites were inferior sub-races, perhaps not men at all, but some sort of sub-human beasts. Jefferson was well versed in the Bible, as were many of those referred to as the 'Founding Fathers', and they all pretty universally gave it a half-regard at best. They almost all owned people, and they all, while claiming to be Christian, skirted the need to treat them in a Christian manner by promoting the notion that they were not men, trading them like cattle. We can't change the history of the nation, and we didn't participate in this abhorrent behavior, but there are vestiges of the thinking that allowed

for slavery visible all over the place in our culture that we can address and we can refuse to participate in.

Many use what is called the curse of Ham, but perhaps should more rightly be called the curse of Canaan, to justify the enslavement and abuse of non-white peoples. If you're not familiar with what I'm referring to, the curse of Canaan is found at Genesis 9, where he and likely his father Ham committed an abominable act upon Noah who was incapacitated by his drunkenness. I'm not going to get into a full analysis of this today, but where the words from Noah are "...cursed be Canaan", generations of men have in my view contorted these scriptures into a "curse of Ham" that somehow then included his other sons – Cush, Phut (or Put) and Mizraim. This is then contorted into meaning all dark-skinned peoples are cursed, since Ham's sons were at least darker skinned if not fully black. They stretch the words to include black skin **being** the curse here, which is simply not what the words say

"And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren." (Gen 9:25)

The curse here is that of extreme servitude, not being marked by skin color, nor is skin color here noted as a marker of those who are cursed or of a lesser person. Moreover, this curse does not extend to the other sons by some magical view of Hebrew that saying one son's name suddenly includes all the sons; nor is there any special Hebrew language marker that makes the curse travel back up the family line, then down and around to each of the other sons – because they weren't involved. This curse is upon Canaan, and it is fulfilled by the enslavement of the Canaanites by Israel and Assyria.

Using the men's names, as some expositors have done, as some kind of prophetic marker, claiming that they all mean 'black', is specious, because if you look at Strong's and other Bible dictionaries, the names don't mean black. I'm talking about what the Bible says on whether skin color was a curse and whether the Bible can be used to justify treating dark skinned peoples differently. That's what we need to look at, not whether we can find some long and winding trail of cultural uses of a word, like the frequently used explanation that the Greeks referred to Egypt as 'Kemet'. Kemet is a possible translation of 'Cham' or 'Ham' and since 'Kemet' in Greek means black, Ham therefore means black, and all black people are cursed. Go search it out – this is a justification used! It's a lot of human logic and supposed history you have to sort through to bring the curse of Canaan into meaning that being black is a curse and that curse enables and justifies treating people of color differently.

Bear in mind that it's white people, white expositors, who are presenting these strained and frankly not scriptural arguments. Go look at the words for yourselves. And consider for a second what is black? When you look at the peoples Ham's sons became – Mizraim/Egypt, Phut/Libya, Cush/Ethiopia (or Arabia), Canaan/Canaanites, there are a

wide variety of skin colors in that mix. The one that you can maybe point to as distinctly black is Cush or Ethiopia, but Ethiopia here might not mean the African Ethiopia, but it may actually mean Arabia. Regardless, darker skinned people are prevalent all over those parts of the world, and so if you try and apply the curse to all of those people, where is the 'servant of servants' for Mizraim, Phut or even Cush? I'm not trying to get into a 'history of peoples' side note here, so I'll leave it to you to go read Gill on Cush. The reality is I don't think it matters for these purposes.

It is too over-reaching and too convenient to bring so many things into an exposition of this event with Canaan to justify the enslavement and then continued centuries-long mistreatment of black people. It is unchristian to try and make the Bible say it is justifiable as God's curse to treat non-white people as inferior or to justifiably enslave them. Yet, this is what was routinely done by American slaveholders. It makes me more than a little angry when I think about it and see the end results of that line of thinking play out around me on a daily basis. Anglo-saxon or 'white' people aren't the only people to enslave others in human history, but when you look at this wretched country and how it puffs itself of as a beacon of freedom, holds out documents like the Declaration of Independence and Constitution as examples of the greatness of American liberty, and has built itself on the backs of black slaves to the point it would kill some 620,000 people fighting over the righteousness of the cause, it nauseates me. Their hypocrisy and inherent wrongness that permeates every stitch of every American flag is utterly inexpressible and I can't find words for it. Land of the free? Not so much.

The only verse I have found that remotely speaks to skin color as a distinguishing factor is here

"Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." (Jer 13:23)

What you have here is a clear indication that the Ethiopian's skin is unique as a simple matter of fact, and it would be different enough that everyone would understand the reference. It doesn't say that black people are lesser humans. It says you won't be able to change and do good any more than the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard can change his spots. Simple, but elegant language that makes a clear point.

I didn't set out to deliver a treatise on slavery, but you can't look at the issues facing this nation today without laying the ax to the root of this tree. We cannot ignore the simple fact that this nation was founded in unjust and unrighteous behaviors in the name of covetousness and greed, and those behaviors were justified by silver tongued men using the Bible to promote the idea that non-whites were punished by God with their non-white skin and therefore it is fine to enslave them, kill them, and then mistreat them in perpetuity. It is a nefarious and ignominious beginning to what flag

wavers proclaim as the greatest nation in the world! Make America great again? She never was! She has from her beginning been a wretched, bloody, hypocritical creature. Great? Never. Great again? Impossible.

These national beginnings have translated into the sicknesses that pervade this nation today. The cesspool that is American society has frequently driven my thoughts toward this verse:

“From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” (Isa 1:6)

Dissecting this verse has some merit in our current discussion, I think. While in its direct context, this is being applied to ancient Israel, it has just as much application to America throughout her history. I break this down into six distinct things that describe a nation that is without God:

She is thoroughly and completely ill – the mental picture should be of a person without a spot of skin from head to toe not covered with some sort of damage, no spot unblemished from humiliating disfigurement and obviously painful trauma;

She is unsound – neither sound of mind nor body, she is ill from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, she can't walk or move right, she can't think right, she can't see right, she can't speak right, etc.;

She is covered in visible wounds – she has no privacy to her illnesses, she is notoriously ill, with wounds, perhaps self-inflicted, but certainly open, visible, some possibly mortal, covering her whole body;

She has bruises where she has no open wounds – her prolonged illness and refusal to do what is needed to heal means that where a wound has occasionally closed up, it shows up as an ugly bruise, marking the previous existence of a wound; it can also mean that due to her unsoundness in the feet she stumbles at every little thing, and every minute incident bruises her because she has no strength of body; it also indicates that even her weakest of enemies takes their opportunities to strike out at her, and where they are not strong enough to fully wound her, they still leave bruises because she cannot properly mount a defense;

She is covered in putrifying sores – there is illness of both outward and inward nature, and it has been ongoing for a severely long time, such that wounds she has had inflicted have become running, pussy, rotten masses, causing infection to course through her body and inflame other wounds with debilitating pain, further infection and hastening her on toward death;

She will not turn aside from her sinful path to bind up her wounds – there are cures for her ailments, there are bindings that could be applied and remedies to seek, but she is too froward in her behavior and too desirous of continuing in her sins to step out of the way and seek aid; she will not seek the “balm of Gilead” (Jer. 8:22) to be healed, relying upon her own power and greatness to return her to strength.

This nation, from her beginnings has been sick, and the result of that sickness in our day is events like what happened in Charlottesville last June, in police officers killing non-white people without repercussion, and a continued basic inequality in this nation for people who aren't white.

We in this body are (mostly) born and raised in this American culture, psyche and zeitgeist. Does that not have some sort of influence on us?

We must be resolute in seeing this national identity for what it is and guarding against it being part of our own identities. Again, not that I see us behaving as racists, but if you are surrounded by evil and soaked in it all day every day, there is danger of it working its way into your thinking. It's not as outwardly obvious or maybe as repulsive on its face as the rank sexual immorality and whoredom we openly reject and guard so much against; it is subtler but just as soul-damning. Insidious is the word I keep returning to.

This is not a black vs white thing. In America it is a white vs every other color thing. For a long time, I've looked at the founding of this country and how non-white people were treated as simply elements of the times and the effects of God's providence. And I still see God's providence in them, but can no longer excuse the unchristian behavior from a supposedly Christian nation. It's a bald-faced lie. The Native American Indians, for instance, are an idolatrous people who worship the dead, nature, and any number of things that are not God Almighty, and much like the Canaanites, it seems the cup of their iniquity was full when Europeans decided to migrate to this nation *en masse*. That doesn't excuse the barbarism and genocidal behavior that took place as the American land mass was colonized. There was no mandate to eradicate the indigenous population like there was, say to eliminate the Amalekites. Compare American behavior to Assyrian and look at God's viewpoint on that:

“O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem

and of Samaria; Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.” (Is 10:5-13)

The King of Assyria was the rod with which Israel was punished, but he did not acknowledge that in his pride! Does his thinking not sound something like “Manifest Destiny”?

For those of you too young to have taken a history class yet, “Manifest Destiny” was an idea promoted in the 1840s as this country was exploding in population and capabilities. It is commonly believed the term was first used in an article regarding the annexation of Texas, where John L. O’Sullivan argued that any debate over said annexation was now moot and unpatriotic (even back in 1845 it was all about the flag waving).

When he pens the phrase, he is arguing that other countries (like England, France and Spain) don’t have any business intruding in the American annexation of Texas and that they should butt out because they have no business working to thwart

“...our policy and hampering our power, limiting our greatness and checking the fulfillment of our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions”.

In that same article, O’Sullivan also describes how the Anglo-Saxon (his words) emigrants from America are about to rightfully take over California from Mexican rule. Later that year, he penned the phrase again, in what is his more famous use of it, regarding American claims on the Oregon territory, saying

“...that claim is by the right of our manifest destiny to overspread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us.”

To O’Sullivan and most if not all Americans at that time, this ‘Manifest Destiny’ didn’t apply to anyone other than white people, regardless of whether the non-whites were there first. God had given white people the right to take over anything they wanted and either rule other people any way they saw fit or send them somewhere else. That’s the essence of ‘Manifest Destiny’. He drives this home in his first article regarding Texas when he says

“On the other hand, it is undeniably much gained for the cause of the eventual voluntary abolition of slavery, that it should have been thus drained off towards

the only outlet which appeared to furnish much probability of the ultimate disappearance of the Negro race from our borders. The Spanish-Indian-American populations of Mexico, Central America and South America, afford the only receptacle capable of absorbing that race whenever we shall be prepared to slough it off—to emancipate it from slavery, and (simultaneously necessary) to remove it from the midst of our own. Themselves already of mixed and confused blood, and free from the "prejudices" which among us so insuperably forbid the social amalgamation which can alone elevate the Negro race out of a virtually servile degradation, even though legally free, the regions occupied by those populations must strongly attract the black race in that direction; and as soon as the destined hour of emancipation shall arrive, will relieve the question of one of its worst difficulties, if not absolutely the greatest."

That philosophy – that white Americans were destined by God to rule over this nation without any "lesser" peoples in our way – this is the American heritage. Conquering and "sloughing off" those we see as inferior.

Do you see the parallel here between Assyria and America? While the expansion across this nation and its tremendous growth were certainly at the hands of God, and a strong scriptural argument can be made that the destruction of the Indian tribes was His just judgment, not recognizing that power as God's was a grievous sin, and that sin was being committed by the first people to colonize the land until now. Not treating all people as truly equal when your founding principles supposedly call for that freedom is the highest form of hypocrisy, unchristian behavior, and is a detestable sickness infecting the supposedly clean air and clear waters of this nation's natural bounty. The arrogance and pride of this country has had 300 or more years to grow and fester to the point that it is the defining national characteristic.

My worry about this is about the warp and woof nature of this sin. It is insidious. It is an infection that impacts the language, the daily life, the entertainment, the politics, the religion – everything about American life is infected with this cancerous malady. The way to think about this is found in the law of the leper, particularly

"The garment also that the plague of leprosy is in, whether it be a woollen garment, or a linen garment; Whether it be in the warp, or woof; of linen, or of woollen; whether in a skin, or in any thing made of skin; And if the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in any thing of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and shall be shewed unto the priest: And the priest shall look upon the plague, and shut up it that hath the plague seven days: And he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is unclean. He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or woof, in woollen or in

linen, or any thing of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire.” (Lev 13:47-52)

The only way to deal with a fretting leprosy was by fire. That’s pretty dramatic! No washing, no dousing in bleach, no fresh air and sunshine on the clothes line. Burn it. Completely.

There has never been any real attempt to heal the sickness. We went from slavery to Jim Crow to the economic and social equivalents of them we have in place today. I’m not talking about reparations or white man’s guilt. I’m talking about simply behaving in thought, word and deed in an appropriate way toward each other, and not promoting racial superiority of any kind!!

We must make it clear that we will have no part in these sins, that we do not approve of them, and that we see them for what they are. We have good Bible to preach the idea that race is not a factor of concern for God, and therefore it has no place in a conversation. Does Paul not tell the Colossians

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” (Col 3:10-11)

Look, there are two types of people in the world, those who have grace and those who do not. There are Jacobs, and there are Esaus. That’s it. There is no racial divide, no distinction along racial lines, just those going to heaven and those going to hell. Race, civilization type, societal status, nationality, etc. are not relevant in the new man because Christ is in all. That is, Christ is in all types of people. There was no racial line drawn when names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. When we put on the new man in Christ, we must seek to be like Him, to emulate Him in every way we can. We must understand plainly that Christ is sufficient to save any part of the creation. He is not bound to one color.

Consider also this verse

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;” (Rev 5:9)

If Christ has redeemed people out of every kindred, tongue, people and nation to God, who are we to approach anyone who is of a different kindred, tongue, people, or nation with anything but the full charitable, peaceable nature we are exhorted to throughout the Scriptures? It is madness to let any thought settle in our minds when we look at a black, or yellow, or red, or green or blue or purple or white person other than ‘God has created that human the same as He has me, and they are entitled to as much, even

more mercy than I am' – that is, none. If we are on equal footing there, should we not be everywhere? If we promote anything else, are we not the same as the Pharisee who was a respecter of persons, judging based on what he saw, not what he knew of the man:

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” (Luk 18:10-12)

Friends, we are in the midst of a plague of horrible, deep, dark spiritual leprosy. A leprosy that has existed for centuries, and that cannot, I believe, be cured, except by that fire that will attend to the elements, and melt them with a fervent heat (2Pet 3:10). Though we cannot repair this, we certainly can (must?) speak to it plainly.

Should we not have signs that speak to the equality of man before God? Should we not go out of our way to address with good Bible words the fact that God will not punish sinners more forcefully because they are of any certain skin color, or lessen the punishment because they are of another? That He does not give special status in Heaven to one race over another? The Jews are His chosen people, and they will have their song that others cannot sing, but there is no 'back of the bus' policy with God, as it were. There is no indication in any scripture I can find that being in the presence of God has degrees, or levels, or stations, or any other qualifier that is based upon your race. And we should preach that.

This isn't some white guilt that we should feel here, this isn't about some political agenda or trying to get on a train to seek popularity or gain people to our cause. This is about being sound in our doctrine and addressing a matter right in front of our faces. This is about preaching against sin. God hates black people, red people, yellow people, brown people, and white people all the same. Black lives don't matter more than white lives in the eyes of God, only the lives of His elect matter. Don't think for one second this is anything more or less than Bible preaching against an evil that permeates our air like a noxious, foul and poisonous gas.

This issue has been burning in my mind for some months now as more and more law enforcement officers kill people of color, and I see more and more examples of systemic inequality all around us that is based solely on skin color. As I've considered the matter it has become more troubling to me as I wonder what other insidious and internal ideals of this nation may infect us without the infection being obvious, like a long working cancer or leprosy, and it causes me to ponder what I have not seen. I hope it does you, too. I'm not suggesting that we can go out of the world, nor should

we ponder fleeing this land – this is where we've been put and to this people with whom we share a common tongue and a common bond we will preach.

Just as Isaiah and Jeremiah preached to their fellow countrymen, and just as they felt profound sadness at the puss-filled, oozing sores that afflicted them, I think we are right to feel a profound sadness toward this nation. That sadness neither absolves us from preaching about the sins nor exempts us from the stumbling blocks they can be. That sadness requires diligence and awareness of the evils this nation uniquely presents and should cause us to be vigilant in the teaching of our children and the watching for each other's souls.

I encourage you to seek me out if you disagree with these notions or that I am overstating things. I'm happy to be corrected or consider additional scriptural evidences I may have missed.

Before I close today I submit for your consideration the following sign possibilities that could be used to make this point in plain view of all men:

Skin color is not a sin – Leviticus

All are equal before God – Rev 5:9

One race under God – Acts 17:26

One race before the throne – Acts 17:26

Racism is a sin – Jas 2:9

God isn't your race or any race – Num 23:19

Elect Lives Matter – Luke 12:7