



## A Renewed Mind Pt 4\_Thinking Biblically about “Race”

August 23, 2020

### **Text: Acts 17: 22-34 (emphasis: v26)**

Let me start by saying that this is a very difficult subject, for everyone...older, younger, darker, lighter, northerner, southerner, Christian and non-Christian.

It's hard to overemphasize how “baked in” an unbiblical worldview is on this subject. Even those who would verbally affirm most of what we are going to share today can slip into speaking on this subject using unbiblical language and categories. Such divisive, sinful talk is woven into the fabric of not just American society, but humanity itself. Brokenness in this area is global and historic.

Many, if not most, really do talk and act as if people who are darker or lighter than them are truly separate, ontologically different, and distinct at an almost species level.

So we have our work cut out for us; may Christ help us.

### **So first, a few Clarifications...**

1. We are not trying to minimize anyone's personal experiences.
2. We are not saying the sin of racism does not exist; sadly, it does.
3. We are not asserting that there are no cultural differences among people of different ethnicities; there are, and they are beautiful.

### **...and a few Critical Warnings:**

1. We must not make idols those differences!
2. We must not fall for the enemy's extremely pervasive lies that saturate this subject and the language surrounding it!
3. We MUST, MUST, MUST develop a biblical worldview on “race!”

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### **Our 2020 “Mars Hill” Moment**

1. In Acts 17, we find Paul working hard in his apostleship, ministering in several places in and around Macedonia (or modern day Greece), including Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, and finally Athens, where Paul was waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him.
2. It cannot be overemphasized how spiritually volatile these places were; like the current culture, the people there were filled with different ideas, paradigms, and views of knowledge and spirituality. Scripture says:

**Acts 17:16-21 (KJV)** *Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. 18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying,*

*May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. 21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)*

3. Please observe Paul's reaction to the wholesale idolatry: his spirit was stirred in him. (v16) The NLT says, "He was deeply troubled by all the idols he saw everywhere in the city."
4. As you look at our communities, nation, and world in 2020, do you see the same? No, we don't necessarily see **carved** idols, but if we look carefully, we can see **cultural** ones, including the false idea of "race." *Please beloved, do make an idol out of "blackness" or "whiteness."*
5. Note Paul's response to what he saw: he spoke out! (v17) "He went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and he spoke daily in the public square to all who happened to be there." (NLT)
6. While doing so, he encountered people with starkly opposing ideas. The Epicureans were those who believed that life was about pleasure; the Stoics believed that life was about the absence of emotion. Neither group understood who the living God was, so Paul preached the Gospel to them.
7. Their initial response? They called him a "babbling!" But, some also continued to listen, even bringing Paul to a place called the Areopagus for a wider hearing.
8. **Be encouraged CRC! Yes, there are all sorts of ideas out there that oppose our God, but many will still hear you if you speak! The question is, "Will you?" :)**
9. After declaring to his hearers the true and living God as opposed to the idols they worshipped (vv22-25), the apostle Paul stood in the midst of Mars Hill and declared that *"From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand when they should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries."* ( Acts 17:26, NLT)
10. This Text is most relevant to one of our main thoughts today: **All men and women, regardless of their skin tone and hair texture, come from one man, Adam.** Scripture declares:

**Genesis 1:26-28 (KJV)** *And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.*

- Because of God's mercy in sparing mankind through Noah's family, Scripture declares:

**Genesis 9:18-19 (KJV)** *And the sons of Noah, that went forth of the ark, were Shem, and Ham, and Japheth: and Ham is the father of Canaan. 19 These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.*

- So its biblically accurate to say that we all came from Eden (Adam and Eve), and we are came of the Ark (from Noah)!

11. Paul went on to share God's heart that:

- All men should seek the LORD (v27)
- That in God alone, we live, move and have our being (v28)
- That we are all created by God and therefore should worship Him and not idols (v29)
- That men are commanded to repent; God will judge the world on the appointed day (vv30-31)

12. The result of his preaching? Some mocked, some wanted to hear more, and some believed! (v32)

**So a question as we conclude our thoughts on the Text: Why did Paul preach on the “oneness” (if you will) of the human race? And why might this be important for us right now?**

**I believe He used it in order to establish the commonality of man’s plight for the Gospel’s sake. In other words:**

1. We have a common origin: **God**.

- **Genesis 3:20 (KJV)** *And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.*
- **Genesis 9:19 (KJV)** *These are the three sons of Noah: and of them was the whole earth overspread.*
- **Malachi 2:10 (KJV)** *Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?*

2. We have a common problem: **Sin**.

- **Romans 3:19 (KJV)** *Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*
- **Romans 5:12 (KJV)** *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

3. We have a command solution: **Christ!**

- **Acts 4:12 (KJV)** *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*
- **Galatians 3:27-29 (KJV)** *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
- **Revelation 7:9-10 (KJV)** *After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their*

hands; **10** And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Oh how these truths are needed in our day! Let us press a bit further:

**I'd like to walk you through this very difficult issue by attempting to answer five questions:**

1. What is Race?
2. What is Racism?
3. What are some common perceptions of Race and Racism?
4. How should Christians respond to Race and Racism Biblically?
5. How might we see true Biblical, Reformation in this area?

**What is Race?**

- When we typically think about race, we think about skin color, hair texture, facial features, speech inflection, musical preferences, and other small biological and culturally communicated attributes.
- In popular parlance, race is defined in terms power structures and cultural, political, and economic influence. Hence the popular ideas of “whiteness vs blackness” and “white privilege.”
- **Biblically however, there is only one “Race” as our Text declares: Human. Race should be defined as “the descendants of Adam and Eve.” From one man, Adam, God created the human “Race” made in His image.**
- Our differences can be explained through the dispersion of men after the tower of Babel, the confusion of the languages of man by God, and the development within the subsequent “**people** groups” of cultural distinctions based on geography, language, traditions, and very small genetic variations based on environment and parental DNA.
- “If one were to take any two people anywhere in the world, scientists have found that the basic genetic differences between these two people would typically be around 0.2 percent—even if they came from the same people group. But these so-called “racial” characteristics that people think are major differences (skin color, eye shape, etc.) “account for only 0.012 percent of human biological variation.” (AIG)
- **Biblically speaking, men weren't divided by pigment and hair, but by geography and family lineage, and more to the central message of Scripture, what they **believed** about God.**
- Our true “differences” are more **cultural** than biological.
- **The truth is that abuses of power come from the **sinful** heart of man and happen regardless of skin color.** Around the world, people oppress other people of the same family or tribe, skin tone, ethnic heritage, language or nationality. Oftentimes, oppression comes based on age, history, or sect, faith or political affiliation. Sometimes, it seems like people oppress other people for no reason at all! This is demonic! And this happens around the world on every continent.
- **These aren't issues of **skin**; they are issues of **sin**...rebellion against the Law of God.**

**What is Racism?**

- Merriam-Webster: “A belief that **race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race.**”

- Admittedly, there have always been those, and there will probably always will be those, who look down upon people that look, talk, or sing differently from them. But the foundation of modern racism is often thought to flow from Charles Darwin.
- In short, in the mid-1800's Darwin popularized the unbiblical concept of evolution to the world. Among other things, Darwin believed that man evolved from monkeys and that different "races" of man evolved slower or faster, with the Caucasian race evolving the fastest, and the brown-skinned races evolving the slowest, being closer to apes.
- The full title of his most popular work is "*On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life.*"
- "In another work called *The Descent of Man*, (Darwin) theorized that man, having evolved from apes, had continued evolving as various races, with some races more developed than others. Darwin classified his own white race as more advanced than those "lower organisms" such as pygmies, and he called different people groups who were "savage," "low," and "degraded." —Answers in Genesis article
- This belief is the foundation of the western racism: that blacks and whites (for example) are nearly ontologically different (or different in our very **nature**, not just our cultures), and has been used to justify some of the worst atrocities the world has ever seen. Again, if you think a person is nearly a different species or 3/5ths of a man, it becomes easier to degrade and humiliate him.
- **The TRUTH again: There is only one RACE. From ONE BLOOD, God created all men.**

### **What are some common Perceptions of Race and Racism?**

Again, there is racism in the world; because it is about sin and not skin, all are susceptible to it. Pigment does not make any man immune to sin. There is a debate raging about how widespread this racism is however. As a result you'll run into varied perceptions:

1. Again, you will encounter those who believe our visible differences denote almost ontological differences...that we truly are different people...almost like a different species! That's why you'll hear ungodly terms about "cross-breeding" or "protecting the bloodline" etc.
2. You'll encounter many people who still grieve (or are angry about) America's past, including the great sins of **slavery** and forced segregation.
3. You'll meet those who see every slight, mistake, or unfortunate incident as involving racism. Indeed, there are those whose entire worldview revolves around perceived (and sometimes real) injustices.
4. You'll meet those who agree things have improved, but still believe racism in America is **institutional** (woven into main areas like finance, education, government, etc.) and **intersectional** (all these areas work together to oppress). Very generally speaking, this is also known as Critical Race Theory.
5. You'll meet folks who know biases exist in the heart of every person, but by God's grace, they strive to love everyone equally. They are willing to call right right and wrong wrong when they see it.

### **How should Christians respond to Race and Racism Biblically?**

1. Realize that Racism is a **sin**, like any other sin.
  - The answer to sin is repentance and holding fast to Christ and His glorious Gospel.
  - Broken and transformed hearts before our holy God is the only true antidote to racism.

- Knowing and believing that Christ died for all kinds of men, that He was buried for all kinds of men, that He rose from the dead for all kinds of men, and that He calls all types of men to Himself is always the starting place to healing!
2. Examine your own **heart** before the LORD.
    - Do you really believe what Scripture says concerning your fellow image-bearers? Have you allowed any racist attitudes to grow in you?
    - Most sincere believers would want to answer “no” to these questions. However the LORD has a way of revealing our hearts.
    - Most of us can admit that we are sometimes tempted to lie, or steal, or covet, or lust. Why are we so shy about admitting we are, at times, tempted to see ourselves or our ethnicity as superior?
    - I believe the default position of humility before the LORD should "LORD, if there is in me some kind of racial bias, I acknowledge it now as sin. Please heal me and help me to walk in love toward my brothers and sisters in Christ." - Clarence Simmons
  3. See people as **individuals**, with unique experiences, doctrinal understandings, cultural pressures, biases, and sin struggles that has impacted their view of “race.”
    - In other words, show mercy. Take each person “as the come,” and minister grace to them.
    - Again, this is no different than any other sin that fallen man struggles with. We would never say “Don’t worry about all that domestic violence stuff; it’s all under the Blood.” Or pornography. Or adultery. Yes the Blood IS our answer, but minister with enough grace so people can hear you.
  4. **Empathize.**
    - Recognize that there were times historically where the standards and perceptions were a little different and that for many, this hurt lingers. The devil uses it to stir up distrust and divide the people of God.
    - Speak and live out God’s truth in love, and guard against being flippant. Lean towards being transparent, honest, loving, and patient in Jesus.
    - Recognize that our national legacy, although wonderful in so many ways, has created a sad situation we are almost always thinking about skin color.
  5. **LOVE!** Just love people. Love them in Jesus. Love them through Jesus. Love them by sharing the message of Jesus. **And may the Greatest Commandment, burning in our hearts through the power of the Holy Spirit, obliterate the hurts and wounds of racism!**

**Mark 12:29-31 (KJV)** *And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: **30** And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. **31** And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.*

**John 15:12-13 (KJV)** *This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. **13** Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*

**1 John 3:23-24 (KJV)** *And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. **24** And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.*

### **How might we see true, Biblical Reformation in this Area?**

Humbly submitted, here is my:

#### **Seven-point Plan for “Racial” Reformation!**

1. **Repent** of your sins and Believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (Mark 1:15)
2. **Forgive** all fellow image-bearers who have offended you and begin **Loving Them** in the LORD. (Eph 4:31-32; Matt 22:39; Jam 2:8)
3. Pursue **personal holiness** (integrity, self-control, modesty, propriety, humility, chastity - 1 Pet 1:16), and a **prayerful, quiet life** (1 Thes 4:11; 1 Tim 2:1-2)
4. Study the Bible and pursue a **Biblical Worldview**; serve the Local Church. (2 Tim 2:15; Heb 10:25)
5. **Take Dominion** for God’s glory; make disciples; work hard, live beneath your means, save, give. (Gen 1:26-28)
6. As necessary, peacefully adjudicate cases of individual injustice through the civil jurisdiction with boldness and grace; even in this, **Remember the Gospel!** (Rom 13:4)
7. Embrace the **Biblical Family** and disciple your children in all the above. (Eph 5:22 - 6:4)

Repeat this **1) Heart-level, 2) Relational, 3) Personal, 4) Mental, 5) Life-Purpose, 6) Societal, and 7) Household Reformation** for a few generations if the LORD tarries.

Amen and Amen.