



I am 56 years old and I have never seen our nation so divided. For years our chief worries were acid rain and save the whales campaign. Not that these environmental issues are unimportant, but they are nothing compared to the Covid controversy and racial strife we are in right now. In all of the burning buildings and talking heads, I have yet to see anyone represent the other side fairly. But that tends to be the way debates and arguments play out. There is always lots of emotional heat and very little light of understanding.

Paul experienced the same thing with his opponents in Galatia. Let me remind you of this story.

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy (Galatians 2:11-14).

The Judaizers were loud and proud and their arguments were very convincing. So much so that they led Peter and Barnabus astray along with perhaps the majority of the church. Don't forget what Peter and the others did. They separated themselves from the Gentile believers. They did that because they considered the Gentiles to be "less than." They were second tier Christians. It was classism of the worst kind. People who should have been united were painfully divided into us vs them. How did it get so bad? Paul opponents—the Judaizers, the legalists—won the day through fear. Paul said that Peter feared the circumcision party (Galatians 2:12). Fear of man ruled the day. Fear of man crushed the truth of the gospel. Fear of man led to strife and division. Sound familiar?

The sheer relevance of the word of God never ceases to amaze me. What we see in Galatians was pure racial and ethnic strife. One class of people considered themselves to be superior to another. You don't have to literally hate someone to think less of them. The word of God not only clearly describes this racial strife, but it does so in a way that mirrors our current culture. And worst of all—it took place within a church. But the word of God also offers the only true solutions.

Here is my outline so you know where I am headed this morning.

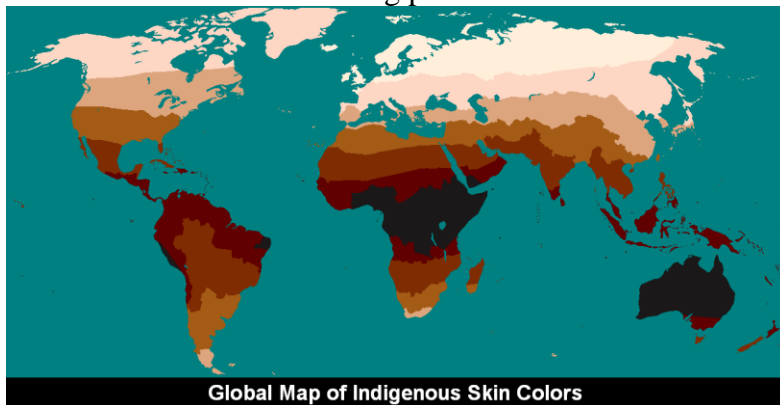
1. One race—Human
2. One sin—Adam’s
3. One instructor—the Law
4. One Savior
5. One Father
6. One in Christ

1. One race—Human

The undeniable truth of Scripture is that we are all one race. This began with Adam and Eve and was restarted with Noah and his three sons. Most of you know how this played out but if not, let me fill in some summary details. This all happened at the tower of Babel.

⁶ And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” ⁸ So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. ⁹ Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth (Genesis 11:6-9).

In terms of what happened next, we need to understand the link between languages and ethnicities. The sons of Noah had an enormous amount of genetic diversity within them. For example, to use skin color as an example, they were most likely a medium brown.¹ As people spread all over the world due to the confusion of languages, their genetic diversity began to diminish. Those who moved to colder climates lost the expression of melanin—which is a brown pigment which gives skin its color. When you get a tan in the summer, your skin turns darker because more melanin is being produced. Those in colder climates gradually got lighter and



lighter skin tone due to a loss of melanin. In warmer climates, more melanin was produced to protect the skin from the damaging effects of UV rays from the sun. This happened until the world began to look like this. Differences in languages caused people to separate and as they did that, skin color changed along with a whole host of other cultural

differences.

Everywhere they went they continue to divide into smaller and smaller groups of people. Those who ended up in the amazon jungle were all from the same family tree. But as they spread throughout the jungle over thousands of years, slightly new languages and cultures were born. This is how we get thousands of different ethnicities. Missiologists estimate that there are about 14,000 different people groups in the world today. They all have different languages, skin colors

and cultures but they are all descended from a single race—the human race. and even though our skin tones are different, it's only because we each express a different amount of brown melanin. At our core we are all the same color. Except for redheads. They have a different type of melanin so they may not be related to the rest of us. 😊

When Paul was in Athens, he summarized this whole story of the human race in a few verses.

“²⁴The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him” (Acts 17:26-27).

Some things to make note of here. God made from one man every nation of man. That man was of course Adam. The Greek word for nation is *ethnos*, or ethnicity. So from Adam came all ethnicities. How did God do this? The tower of Babel is implied here. God “determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.” In other words, he used Babel to force all people to spread out so that they became many nations and many ethnicities. Do you see what this means? It means that not only are we one race—as ordained by God—but ethnicities themselves were ordained by God. God confused their language which forced them to spread out which birthed thousands of unique ethnicities.

Now we know that this was a sort of judgment, was it not? God identified a problem in Genesis. “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.” The problem is man’s independence and self-sufficiency. They were all working together, which one could argue was a good thing compared to warring nations and ethnicities we have today. But God knew that their cooperation may have looked like societal progress, but it would have resulted in a spiritual disaster. It would have driven them further from God. Which is why the last verse is so important.

God “determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, *that* they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him.” The last phrase is a purpose clause. Being together meant spiritual disaster so God intentionally spread them out **so that they should seek God**. If you only have the Genesis passage it looks like a judgment upon mankind. First, they were wicked so God destroyed them in a worldwide flood. Then they worked on a tower so God divided them up. In Genesis it looks like a type of judgment but as Paul explained in Acts, the purpose was not judgment but rather redemption. Do you see what this means? It means that ethnicities were not only God’s sovereign plan, but ethnicities were part of his sovereign plan of redemption. I can’t explain every way that this is true because today, ethnicities and people groups seem to be a barrier to the gospel due to the thousands of different languages. You cannot present the gospel to the until you first translate at least the New Testament into their native tongue. It appears like a barrier to us, but God declared that all of it was for a redemptive purpose—“so that they should seek God.”

Therefore, all ethnicities should be recognized and respected for their differences and their beauty. God ordained that they would exist. But one has to be careful here, because ethnic culture itself is never neutral. In China, the culture considered very small feet to be beautiful, so they bound the feet of little girls to keep their feet small. This obviously grossly deformed their feet and caused a lifetime of excruciating pain and. This maiming of little girl's feet was practiced for about a thousand years. Missionary Gladys Aylward helped eliminate the cultural practice of foot binding in China and it no longer exists. And she did this all the while preaching the gospel.

Worse still, the Hindus in India practiced infanticide. William Carey, Jr., reported one such sacrifice to his father: A boatman pulled a drowning child into his boat. He presented the infant to its mother. She took the child, broke its neck, and cast it into the river again!² Carey fought hard against the religious practice that was sanctioned by the government. He did this cultural work while working furiously to translate the Bible into their native languages. He actually stopped preaching so he could concentrate on his translation work. He and his fellow missionaries also worked to stop the religious practice of sati, or widow burning. When a man died, his wife was bound by ropes and placed on top of the funeral pyre of her husband and burned alive. In the name of their Hindu gods, they also drowned lepers and killed their aged and dying relatives. As the gospel spread, these cultural evils began to cease.

Many of you know that years ago I started a diversity dialogue in town with a number of progressive voices in our area. We discussed homosexuality, abortion and every other controversial subject that came up. Despite my continual proclamation of God's word, no one seemed interested in the truth. One summer night, Karen and I invited them over for a cookout and then we watched *The End of the Spear* together. As you may know, this is the Jim and Elisabeth Elliot story of the Auca Indians in Ecuador. These tribes were at constant war with one another that caused a murder rate of about 50%. Can you imagine every other person in your village being speared to death? Of course all of this murder stopped after the gospel of Jesus began to penetrate their hearts and their culture. We showed this movie to these progressives thinking surely they would be in favor of eliminating a 50% murder rate. Nope. Just the opposite. They were shocked that westerners would dare to enter these ancient cultures and ruin them.

All of these horrible practices in China, India and in the jungles of Ecuador were deeply embedded into their ethnic culture. Human slavery was embedded into the culture of the United States. So while we can and should celebrate the good parts of all cultures, every last one of them have evil, sinful parts to them. No culture or ethnicity should ever be beyond appropriate criticism—including our own. And since we actually live here, I would say especially our own culture is never beyond criticism.

Many ethnicities but one race. At our core we are all one race. At our core we are all a medium brown in skin color. The Bible is crystal clear about this. But what about the rest of the world? Does the world believe that we are all of one race? I was actually surprised to discover that seems to be the predominant view, though you would not know that from media. Let me give you some examples.

Vox is a very left-leaning media outlet and they state that race is a myth. The concept of race is itself racist, which has some truth to it. They teach that we are all one race.³

You may have heard of Critical Race Theory. It has become the predominant viewpoint of race relations and it is starting to enter evangelicalism. I will talk more about this next week but one of the core tenets of Critical Race Theory is that race is a social construct. Critical race theory teaches that race is a social construct.⁴

An online bookseller called Social Justice Books promotes this book: *All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Got Our Skin Color*. Minus the tower of babel, they draw the same basic conclusions that we do. That we are descended from a common ancestor and we all have brown skin with varying levels of melanin expressed.⁵

The Human Genome Project and National Geographic both teach that all mankind is descended from one common ancestor. We are all one race.⁶

Surprisingly, the Bible and even the most liberal leaning media and science organizations all agree. We are not many races. We are all one race. If we have such universal agreement on this point, why do we find ourselves at odds with so much discussion on racism? Because of our second point.

2. One sin—Adam's

The predominant view on race and racism in our culture is called Critical Race Theory. Proponents hold that mankind's fundamental problem is oppression.⁷ But Bible believing Christian holds that our fundamental problem is sin. Paul lays this out in Romans chapter five.

¹²Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—¹³for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come (Romans 5:12-14)

Our statement of faith is likewise clear.

3. The Human Condition

We believe that God created Adam and Eve in His image, but they sinned when tempted by Satan. In union with Adam, human beings are sinners by nature and by choice, alienated from God, and under His wrath. Only through God's saving work in Jesus Christ can we be rescued, reconciled and renewed.

We are sinners by nature and by choice. Sin really is the great leveler of all people. We are united by our one race in Adam and we are united by our one sin in Adam. We don't deny that serious oppression exists. Critical Race Theory is another topic I will cover next week, but we disagree that it is the fundamental problem. And how you define a problem always leads you to differing solutions. If oppression is your core issue, then only liberation will solve your problem. But if sin is your core issue, only a Savior can bring you true liberation. It's unfortunate because

the liberation language is so similar to the Bible in many ways. The Bible says that sin is slavery. When Jesus rescues us from sin that is called freedom. Oppression and liberation vs slavery and freedom. They use such similar language, yet they are radically different. One huge problem is that Critical Race Theory has begun to infiltrate evangelical churches.

	Critical Race Theory	Biblical Christianity
Problem	Oppression	Slavery to sin
Solution	Liberation	Freedom
Source of Truth	CRT books	Word of God

I was listening to two black pastors talking on a podcast. One guy had already mentioned that he was darker skinned than the other. He said that he had more melanin than him. Then he said, “My melanin can’t sin against you. But my heart can.” It’s about the heart. But is it really that simple? We are all one race and therefore all racism is due to the sin of hatred. Is the simple solution that we all we need to do is repent of our sin and all racism will go away? Is that all we have to do? Of all places, NPR identified the core issue here.

For evangelical Christian leaders, however, crafting a response to Floyd’s killing is complicated by their view of sin in individual, not societal, terms and their belief in the need for personal salvation above all. Evangelical theologians have long rejected the idea of a “social gospel,” which holds that the kingdom of God should be pursued by making life better here on earth.⁸

Let’s be clear about one thing. We should all be committed to just laws in our society. Government exists to protect life and liberty. If we can help remove an unjust law from the books, I don’t care about the politics or the religion of the person who votes with me. We can and should work together to change an unjust law. We should hold people accountable who break just laws. But at the end of the day, if your primary goal is to change society without changing the heart, it is like wanting the kingdom of God without the King. It’s another false dichotomy because most people can’t hold two things to be true at the same time. It’s not either/or, it’s both/and. We can work to change society but that must never become the core of our mission. If you change enough hearts the larger society will begin to change as well. Take the example of the Auca Indians again. They had a murder rate of 50% in their culture. Only a powerful, heart-transforming gospel could ever do that. Cultural transformation only happened after personal transformation.

As a final example I want to show a video clip of the [EE-Taow story](#) from Papau, New Guinea.

Their culture was built upon deceit. They would kill women to protect their lies. This was a practice that extended to almost every village in the land. But as the gospel penetrated their hearts it also began to radically change their culture.

So what should we do about this? What is to be our response? (remember, this is just part one so we will discuss this more next week) but for now, let me take you back to the original problem in Galatia.

¹¹ But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. ¹³ And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ **But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel,** I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

The answer to the problem of racial and ethnic division is to be in step with the gospel. If God created ethnicities for a redemptive purpose it follows that our main role is to play our part in that process? And what is our part in God’s sovereign plan of redemption. God redeems but we proclaim. So job number one is the proclamation of the gospel. Proclamation to the nations—to the ethnicities of the world but also to ourselves. We need daily reminders that Jesus is our only hope in life and death. Also, the gospel roots out sin in our lives that can become the roots of racism—hatred, malice, envy, slander, gossip.

Number two solution—Use the gospel to build healthy families. There is one indisputable fact. Intact families lead to less disparity of income, health and safety between all ethnicities. There was a study that followed geniuses—those who with IQs of 140 and above. They followed these very smart people for fifty years and saw by the end that time, even among this small slice of intellectually privileged people, they ended up with a wide range of outcomes in health and wealth. And the number one factor for determining outcomes was a healthy family.

Out of wedlock births in the black community is currently 72% and rising. Out of wedlock births in South Korea is 1.5%. In 1950 after decades of the most severe oppression from China and Japan, the per capita income of South Korea was less than that of Haiti and Ethiopia. Today they are the 12th largest economy in the world.⁹ A healthy family culture is at the core of their social and economic success. And since the 1950’s the gospel has been spreading through South Korea like wildfire. Per capita, they are now the number one sender of missionaries in the world.

But we are not just interested in maintaining intact families. We want to help build gospel-centered families. Our discipleship at Grace Church is worship based, like what I talked about last Sunday in my Father’s Day message. There is no discipleship without personal worship. You can’t give away what you don’t already possess.

Isn’t it amazing that God ordained that the main answer to cultural issues as difficult as this are the very thing the church is supposed to be doing all the time? May God strengthen us for this high calling.

Rich Maurer
June 28, 2020

¹ Answers in Genesis—everyone’s skin is brown <https://rb.gy/knnl9x>

² <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/ministry-in-killing-fields>

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnfKgffCZ7U>

⁴ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/critical-race-theory>

⁵ <https://socialjusticebooks.org/all-the-colors-we-are-story-skin-color/>

⁶ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/10/genetics-history-race-neanderthal-rutherford/>

⁷ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/incompatibility-critical-theory-christianity/>

⁸ <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/06/871014393/evangelical-christians-grapple-with-racism-as-sin>

⁹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/christianity-quit-growing-korea/>