



“Racial segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we have in Christ; for in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free, Negro nor white.”

Any guesses as to who said this? Martin Luther King Jr said it and of course it is a quotation from our text in Galatians 3, verse 28. If you ask anyone who is the most influential American in regard to civil rights, 99 out of 100 people would say MLK. His legacy and impact on civil rights and social justice is profound. But he was also a man who practiced the most vile behavior imaginable

Last year a British magazine published a 7800 word article titled, “The Troubling Legacy of Martin Luther King.”¹ The article tells how King had affairs with at least 40 women and did other vile things I can’t mention in a family friendly sermon. Upon hearing this some might think that the author must be some right-wing, white supremacist who only wants to taint the legacy of King. The author of the article is a Pulitzer prize-winning biographer and a self-described Democratic Socialist.² His sources are vetted summaries of FBI tapes. No one wants to go on record in challenging the facts in this article because all of the audiotapes will be released to the public in 2027 and then we will know for certain.

Does this mean that all of the good that MLK did for civil rights is now forever tainted and undermined by his private life? Some might say so. There’s no doubt that if King lived today and said and did the same things, he would be widely discredited. The media knew about his private life but never wrote about it. I mention this because the current discussion on racism is a bit like the mixed legacy of MLK. I think that King truly believed his core message of racial justice and reconciliation. Whether or not he believed the whole Bible, this quote from Galatians 3:28 is perfect. It is the text we are using to talk about the same subject. But as you listen to the myriad of voices on this topic, it can become so overwhelming because you don’t know who to believe. You either turn it all off or else you become hardened in your own categories and refuse to be confronted with facts and Biblical truth.

At all times, believers need to be people who bend our will to God’s word. But the problem is that, like with all issues, people use the Bible to support viewpoints that are polar opposite of one another. So whose version of the Bible do you believe?

But that's true every time I stand here and deliver a message. I hope you will listen but you must check my words against Scripture.

Here's where we left off last Sunday. We are all one race, and remarkably, we saw that most of the liberal thinkers and scientists agree with this point. But we diverge drastically on point 2, our sin, which is the source of the problem.

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

But even here I see many Christians get this wrong. If you read Christian books you are most likely familiar with Tim Keller. The two I have read I have loved are *The Prodigal God* and *Counterfeit Gods*. Other than the fact that he is a diehard theistic evolutionist, I have really appreciated Keller. But on the topic of social justice, he gets a lot of things horribly wrong. He said this in a conference posted on Youtube.

“You are responsible and you are condemned for what your ancestors Adam and Eve did. The whole structure of the gospel is based on corporate responsibility. If you say I am only responsible for what I have done and only what I have done, there is no gospel.”³

Do you see what he has done here? It's the third sentence that is most troubling. He has taken the truth of Romans 5, that we are sinners by nature through Adam—which we believe and which I showed you last week. That's orthodox biblical truth. But then he goes on to say in the third sentence that since we are guilty due to Adam's sin—which was not our sin—then it follows that all sin is corporate and shared. I cannot overestimate the danger of this teaching. By Keller's standard, I should repent for the man in Bangladesh who beat his wife yesterday. By Keller's standard I share the guilt of Hitler's atrocities and Stalin's systematic extermination of his own people. Now Keller would not want to take it that far but once you open that theological door by saying we are corporately responsible for each other's sins, you have to say that I am responsible for all of these sins, since I share them in the corporate sense.

Keller is doing exactly what the woke left and rage mobs are doing. They want to lay all racism at our feet all the time. I want to dive into Critical Race Theory because I think we need to understand the foundations of so much of what the social justice movement is doing. Sadly, many evangelicals are buying into this in order to be more relevant to the surrounding culture.

My goal is to show how wrong they are about laying all of racism at our feet all the time. But first, a caution. As I work through this you might want to think, “That's right! I'm not a racist. I'm so tired of being told I am a racist and a white supremacist.” Me too. But when we do this we run the very real risk of cutting ourselves off from genuine truth and necessary repentance.

So my goal is not to get us off the hook. My goal is to remove false ideas of sin and social justice and replace with a Biblical understanding and sin and repentance. Alright?

I want to start with the most popular book on Critical Race Theory. What you see on the evening news and in Black Lives Matters is underpinned by books like this. So hopefully this will help you make sense of it all. The book, *White Fragility*, was published in 2018. It has sold 750,000 copies, which is a lot for a book like this, but right now it is flying off the shelves in our post George Floyd lives. It has been on the NY Times bestseller list for 95 weeks since it was published. I did not read the book, but I did listen to an hour and a half lecture by the author that she gave two days after her book was released. So it was her own summary of the content of the book, which is a fair representation. You could substitute the phrase white privilege for white fragility. They are essentially one and the same. Here is my summary of her main points.

1. If you deny for any reason that you are a racist, this is undeniable proof that you are a racist. Defending yourself against racism is called “weaponized defensiveness.”
2. 100% of the disparities in the black culture are due to systemic racism. You can never use any other evidence other than systemic racism to describe the disparities. If you do, this is more evidence that you are a racist, even if you are a black person who is presenting the evidence.
3. There is no cure for white fragility. It doesn’t matter how much you learn, how badly you feel or how often you repent. You will always be a white racist.

I hope you can see how crazy this is. Here are some implications of her beliefs, which again, are themselves summaries of Critical Race Theory. They are also what most protestors on the streets believe.

1. White fragility is always a self-fulfilling prophecy. It’s a trap. It’s like the old question, Have you stopped beating your wife? In critical race theory, there are only two options—either you are a white racist or else you are a white fragile racist. Once they define the terms in this way, there is no way out of this trap. Andrew Sullivan said that “It is the same circular argument that was once used to burn witches.”⁴
2. CRT shuts down all conversation. I am all for listening to the stories and perspectives of others. That’s why I helped to start a two-year long diversity dialogue in our area. This is why I was part of *Resetting the Table* for two summers as they held listening and training sessions. But CRT does not allow for genuine conversation. They tell us that we are supposed to listen but that only goes one way. This is doubly bad because it prevents important conversation about race from ever happening.
3. Facts are the kryptonite for Critical Race Theory. They bill themselves as the intellectual superiors but I’m telling you, the lecture by this author was filled with logical fallacies. Most of her lecture was setting up straw men which she then easily knocked over.
4. White fragility is racist because it defines people solely by the color of their skin and their sin of racism is therefore inescapable for the very same reason.
5. They are guilty of the very thing they accuse everyone else of doing—they are fragile and defensive. By closing off all criticism by calling you a racist, they step into their own trap.

6. There are no real solutions to white fragility. They want you to engage in: 1) a continual acknowledgement that you are a racist 2) their movement by telling the world that they are a racist. But this is no solution at all but rather a perpetual shame machine.
7. This is not a race issue. This is not a political issue, although good government policy is always necessary. This is a gospel issue. CRT is a complete worldview to the point that it is like another religion. In every sense of the term, it is a religious cult. They use the same arguments and strategies as any cult does.
8. It's a religion of hopelessness that is built upon a false hope. It's hopeless because there are no real and final solutions but at the same time, they seem to provide an avenue of hope through activism. They want you to have remorse for the sin of racism (they typically don't use the word sin) but the solution is to continue to feel more remorse. You think you are doing something good and noble by admitting your racism, but this feeling never goes away and only intensifies over time.
9. If all white people are sinners all the time then there is no forgiveness for the alleged offender. So not only is there no solution for racism but you have also created perpetual sin that cannot be forgiven. Which of course is the exact message they want to convey. It's how the monster is fed.

All of this pain and misery happens because they have a wrong idea of sin. They have a worldview which has extreme religious zeal but no savior. I have quoted a couple of times from radical atheist Sam Harris. But even he understands how wrong this is.

Those exaggerations [of racism] are toxic and perversely may produce more real racism. False claims of victimhood can diminish the social stature of almost any group, even a group that has a long history of real victimization. The double standards, the goalpost shifting, the idiotic opinion pieces in the New York Times, the general hysteria that the cult of wokeness has produced. I think this is all extremely harmful to civil society...and to the welfare of African Americans.

If you care about justice—and you absolutely should—you should care about facts and the ability to discuss them openly.

To outgrow our obsession with racial difference, we have outgrow our obsession with race. And you don't do that by maintaining your obsession with it.⁵

But as I said last week, as clearly unbiblical as this is, Critical Race Theory is worming its way into evangelical institutions and churches. Last year the Southern Baptist Convention passed this resolution.

RESOLVED, That critical race theory and intersectionality should only be employed as analytical tools subordinate to Scripture—not as transcendent ideological frameworks.⁶

On the one hand, it's good that they say that CRT is subordinate to Scripture but based on what we have seen so far, there is nothing within CRT that is redeemable to be even considered as an analytical tool.

Having said all of that, I actually still believe in systemic racism and classism. But I hold this in a way that is vastly different than the way most people are using this term. Listen to this passage from Nehemiah 5.

Now the men and their wives raised a great outcry against their fellow Jews. ² Some were saying, “We and our sons and daughters are numerous; in order for us to eat and stay alive, we must get grain.” ³ Others were saying, “We are mortgaging our fields, our vineyards and our homes to get grain during the famine.” ⁴ Still others were saying, “We have had to borrow money to pay the king’s tax on our fields and vineyards. ⁵ Although we are of the same flesh and blood as our fellow Jews and though our children are as good as theirs, yet we have to subject our sons and daughters to slavery. Some of our daughters have already been enslaved, but we are powerless, because our fields and our vineyards belong to others.”

Everyone in this story is a Jew, so there’s no racism occurring here. But what is happening is an imbalance of power. There was great inequality among the Israelites during a time of famine. It got so bad that some Israelites were sold into slavery to their fellow Israelites to be able to buy grain and not starve to death. This was not just the natural distribution of wealth among the rich and the poor. This was a severe crisis where some were on the brink of starvation. Not only was this a direct violation of the Mosaic Law, it was an abuse of power. Nehemiah swept in and immediately corrected the horrible situation. What stands out most to me in this story is their complaint, “we are powerless.” They were enslaved by their fellow Jews and they were absolutely powerless to change their circumstances.

I know a little of this feeling of powerlessness in the face of abusive power. A few months ago I mentioned a ministry I was trying to help. I have worked with a small team for over five months and spent about 150 hours on this issue and collectively our team has probably put in 400 hours on it. The chief problem is that the executive director has disqualified himself in a multitude of ways. We have presented reams of evidence to the board of this ministry but to no effect. In the last two weeks, the board officially declared their executive director to be innocent of all charges and they affirmed their full confidence in him. I cannot tell you how powerless we feel. We did all that we could, but it wasn’t enough. No matter what we do, we do not have any real power to effect change—humanly speaking, that is. Obviously, God could change everything in an instant.

I love the Nehemiah example, but the Bible is littered with countless stories of the oppressor harming the oppressed. Examples occur in almost every book of the Bible. The longest and most brutal example is the four hundred years of slavery in Egypt. There is nothing else close to the ruthlessness of the Egyptian oppressors and the suffering of the oppressed Israelites. All throughout Scripture you see this imbalance of power structures.

There will always be leaders and followers. There will always be government officials and ordinary citizens. There will always be employers and employees. There will always be corporations and consumers. There will always be an imbalance of power. That’s simply the way life works. It’s the way it has to work. But just because there is an imbalance of power doesn’t mean there needs to be an abuse of power.

But when the rage mob and proponents of white fragility talk about systemic racism, they can't see the distinction between an imbalance of power and an abuse of power. They see them as one and the same. This is why they conclude that all systems are evil. All power structures are inherently evil. They want to dismantle all systems, but we want to improve the systems. They want to defund the police and we want improve the police. So there's a severe overreaction to a serious subject like racism, and again, all because they do not understands the true nature of sin. They see all systems as evil, but we see individuals within all systems as being sinful.

White fragility, which seems to be the pervasive viewpoint, is harmful to their own cause and it grossly out of balance. But we also need to be very careful that we don't have an overreaction to what we see around us. Maybe systemic racism doesn't exist everywhere but certainly cultures of racism exist. After slavery was made illegal, embedded cultures of racism did not change quickly. After Jim Crow laws were repealed, cultures of racism still went on with just as much vigor.

Cultures are powerful things. As we have been talking about legalism for many weeks. In legalistic churches you usually don't see all of their legalistic rules written down as church policy. But they persist just as if they were codified into church policy. In fact, culture is almost always more powerful than a policy. What happens when church leaders try to change something that has been part of church culture for a long time. Almost everyone says, "We can't do that because we always done it this way." You really have to change the culture before you change a policy.

So be careful that we do not harden our hearts to genuine problems in our nations and cultures. We say things like:

I will never bow down to another person

I will never apologize for something I haven't done.

My ancestors didn't own slaves, so why do I need to repent for this?

So maybe we don't need to repent for having slaves. And it's really difficult right now because that is all we are being told we need to do, so there's a natural defensiveness that kicks in and the more we hear it, the more defensive we become. We must be so careful that we harden our hearts.

Let me leave you with two Scriptures and a question.

"God is a righteous judge,
and a God who feels indignation every day." (Psalm 7:11)

This is a great reminder that the holiness of God caused his to feel indignation for sin and evil. He hates the strong preying on the weak, regardless of their ethnic origin or skin color. It's good to be reminded that he cares and so should we.

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:13).

This reminds us how much we need one another. We need to exhort one another daily. We need this so we ourselves are hardened by sins deceitfulness. It’s easy to throw stones at people and beliefs with whom we have strong disagreement while hardening ourselves to genuine repentance for our own sin.

A final question.

What family cultures of sin have you inherited that you may be passing down to the next generation? The Bible says that “The sins of the Fathers are passed down to the third and fourth generation.” That happens because of family culture. Just as sins can become embedded into societal culture, so they can become embedded into family culture. These are powerful things which can be changed and the patterns broken.

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¹ https://standpointmag.co.uk/issues/june-2019/the-troubling-legacy-of-martin-luther-king/?mod=article_inline

² <https://www.wsj.com/articles/a-reckoning-with-martin-luther-king-11560813491>

³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhJcTKTVGo&fbclid=IwAR2UD_xrDqTkO0IUolA7NnaMVkx5pFsnZ3Q4VB6rZg_mLPYr4f03w-hMTPs

⁴ <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2020/06/andrew-sullivan-is-there-still-room-for-debate.html?fbclid=IwAR0DQcxBqM3zjE9Jva-Bwtgir1qemKHJ5CIZZpOPnsnbWejBMgDCR-ngjCo>

⁵ <https://samharris.org/can-pull-back-brink/>

⁶ <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/2308/resolution-9--on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality>