

Our Response To Racism (Part 2)

Rom 13; If you're visiting with us, welcome to our church. We're glad you're here. And if you're joining us via livestream (9am West), God bless you.

➤ We're finishing a mini-series on racism this weekend, and finishing a message on our response to it. A message I started last weekend, as an application of **Phil 2:4**.

[4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. It's a command for every single one of us to get outside our *own* world and our *own* interests, and into *the interests of others*. Including racism.

Racism is the feeling of distrust or dislike because of a person's color or ethnicity.

➤ And last week, putting that together with Phil 2:4, I gave you **4 implications** of that. 4 implications of looking to the interests of others when it comes to racism.

(1) **We must strive for the unity God intends.** (2) **We must seek to understand.** (3) **We must stop stereotyping.** (4) **We must start empathizing.** That was last week. This week, I have 5 more. And they don't get easier. So let me pray. "God, open our eyes, soften our hearts, reveal our issues, and help us to hear what you want to say."

The next application of looking to the interests of others when it comes to racism, is this:

5. We must stop making excuses.

In the first part of Eph 4, the Apostle Paul says he doesn't want us to be tossed about like children (**Eph 4:15**), by falsehoods.

[15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. We are to grow up, mature, in every way, to be like Jesus.

How? By speaking the truth in love. Including the truth about racism.*****

Which means, among the other things I've already said, we must stop making excuses.

➤ Starting with police shootings.

We must stop making excuses **for inappropriate police shootings**. Shootings of unarmed people who aren't a clear and imminent danger to those around them.

Is there a large *number* of such shootings? No. In fact, it's *minuscule*. Especially so, when compared to the number of senseless homicides by *civilians*.

Police shoot about 50 unarmed people each year. Black and white. Both.

And that's *not* to imply they're all inappropriate. Sometimes the victim is *attacking* the officer. But even *including* those, it's 50. Plus or minus.

Meanwhile, civilians kill 15,000 people each year.

So by comparison, we don't have a massive problem when it comes to inappropriate police shootings. Nor a *racial* problem based on the numbers. We don't.

But when there *is* a shooting, and it *is* inappropriate, we shouldn't make excuses. Which is usually the first place we go. I know I do.

"There must be extenuating circumstances. The victim shouldn't have been there in the first place. Things happen in the heat of the moment." We make excuses.

When instead, we should mourn with those who mourn, call a wrong a wrong, and advocate for whatever action is best.

➤ 2nd, and with that in mind, we must also stop making excuses **for criminal activity**.

Like blaming systemic *racism* for run-ins with the police, when they're the result of criminal activity. Or automatically *blaming* the police when something goes awry.

Just because many blacks grow up in poverty and neglect, doesn't excuse their decision to commit a crime. Just like it doesn't excuse poor white people.

Is the deck stacked against blacks in poverty? For sure. From poor parenting to poor examples. Hopelessness to entitlements. Gang bangers to drug money. The deck is absolutely stacked against them to do what's right.

But it's not impossible. And to make excuses for doing what's wrong, is wrong. And does *nobody* any good. In fact, it just enables them to do bad.

We must stop making excuses for criminal activity.

➤ 3rd, we must stop making excuses **for insubordinate behavior**.

Just because a black person's ancestors were *abused* by the law, doesn't mean they're *above* the law. A mindset that's prevalent in some circles.

If you do something wrong, you should expect to be caught. I don't care what color you are. *Be sure your sins will find you out* the Bible says. (Nu 32:23)

And just because you *are* caught, doesn't mean *racism* was the motive.

Or just because you're *suspected* of doing something wrong, doesn't mean racism is the motive.

But even if it is, even if the motive for your arrest or your stop *is* racially motivated, that's *not* the time to resist. That's *not* the time to flee.

That's not the time to *ignore* a police officer's orders. Or behave insubordinately in *any* way, shape, or form.

Look at Rom 13:1 – *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*

And then in v5, after expanding on that thought, Paul says it again.

[5] Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.

2 times in 5 verses, God tells us to be subject to the governing authorities.

That means, if an officer of the law says stop, you stop. If he says get down, you get down. If he says do the stinking hokey-pokey, start doing a pirouette.

I don't care *who* you are. Or *what* motive you think is at work.

Is it not obvious in light of recent events that your *life* could be on the line?

Drop your pride, and *be subject*. And stop making excuses for those who aren't.

➤ 4th, we must stop making excuses **for absentee fathers and irresponsible mothers**.

Out of wedlock birthrates among African Americans is 75%.

That means fathers are shamefully shirking their responsibility, and mothers are shamefully offering their bodies.

But instead of citing *that* as one of the main reasons for racial disparities, we make all kinds of *other* excuses.

Systemic racism, prejudiced laws, insufficient welfare, lack of opportunity, you name it. Not that those things *aren't* true in some cases, but that a far more *significant* reason lies with deadbeat dads and irresponsible moms. And we have to stop it.

We have to stop perpetuating it, and we have to stop making excuses for it.

As of 2016, the poverty rate among black single mothers in the US, was 31.6%. But among blacks who are married? 7.5%. And it's been that way for decades. (**Summ**) So racism *can't* be the main issue for poverty in our country. And playing the victim as if it is, or making excuses for poor decisions or immoral choices, helps no one. Instead . . .

6. We must start emphasizing personal responsibility.

We must *stop* making excuses, and *start* emphasizing personal responsibility. In our schools, our families, our conversations, and our government.

If you father a child, step up. If you get pregnant, own it. God forgives and God enables. If you act out, that's on you. If you commit a crime, you do the time. We must start emphasizing personal responsibility.

Take incarceration rates for example. We have 2.3M people in our prison system, and 40.2% of them are black *men*. While comprising only 6.5% of the population. That's disproportionate.

And while we have some things to shore up in our criminal justice system, and some inequitable sentencing practices to correct . . .

We would be remiss to focus only on that, while ignoring the personal responsibility of those involved. Those who *commit* the crimes.

It's a classic example of straining at gnats while swallowing camels. Something those in the race grievance industry have perfected.

I don't mind if authors, and bloggers, and podcasters, and pastors beat the drum of unfair sentencing practices. They should. We all should.

As long as we also beat the drum of personal responsibility. For the crimes.

And quite frankly, most don't. Most are *missing* the beat. In fact, the drum isn't even in the room. Most people who speak to this issue, the issue of incarceration rates . . .

Don't even *mention* personal responsibility.

Which causes thinking people to discount *everything* they say. And that's a shame.

If we're going to make any headway on this issue, we have to start emphasizing personal responsibility, along *with* the injustices of racism. That's #6.

#7 in looking to the interests of others on this issue . . .

7. We must stop demonizing the police.

If we're going to make more progress on eradicating racism from our society, we have to stop assuming the police are at fault in every shooting or confrontation.

We have to stop assuming they're to blame for every altercation or arrest.

We have to stop assuming they're rotten or racist because they wear a badge.

We must stop demonizing the police.

Rom 13:2. After saying be *subject* to the authorities God has put in place, it says . . .

Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [3] For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, [4] for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

The police, as the law enforcement arm of our government, have been *appointed* by God, v2; they're *in authority*, v3; and twice called God's *servant*, v4.

And don't forget v1 that says – *there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.*

Which means, among other things, that it's shameful to demonize those in authority over us, just because they're *in that position*.

As if they're out to get us, and are as bad as they can be.

➤ I was at a conference in Memphis earlier this year to commemorate Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, and remember his efforts in fighting for Civil Rights.

And it was very good in most respects. But in a few, it was quite troubling.

Like hearing only *blame* for the police. Who were made the scapegoat several *times* in passing comments from pastors and leaders. Not good.

And even worse are *protesters* from time to time, who shout things like "Pigs in a blanket, fry 'em like bacon." Or movements who advocate *killing* police officers.

We *have* to stop that. Demonizing police officers through inflammatory rhetoric and blanket accusations help no one.

➤ Are there some bad *apples* in law enforcement? Absolutely. Because they've been rooted out in the past.

But that doesn't mean *all* police officers are bad. Just because a *few* are biased or prejudiced, doesn't mean the *rest* are.

Or just because *you* had a bad run-in with the police, doesn't mean all police run amuck.

Police officers put their lives on the line every single day. Day in and day out.

Most, fulfilling their duty to serve and protect as best they can.

And for *that*, they end up dealing with the worst of the worst many times. People up to no good, with no regard for the law or the Authority behind it. Capital A.

So instead of demonizing them, we ought to respect them. Instead of thinking ill of them, we ought to honor them. Instead of hating them, we ought to appreciate them.

7 "musts" in our response to racism. And with those in mind, I want to give you some very practical things to do. Starting with the little things.

8. We must start doing the little things.

The first of which, is to *smile*. Do you know how far a simple smile goes?

One of the best ways to mitigate the ill-effects of racism as a white person, is to smile.

I saw my uncle Kenny do this as a little kid, and I couldn't *believe* the effect it had.

And purposed right then that I was going to do the same.

Smiling at those who are different than you, those who aren't sure if you hate them or accept them, is one of the best ways to put them at ease, affirm their dignity . . .

And welcome them into your space. Including our church. We must start smiling.

That means some of you need to look in a mirror. Because your resting face scares me.

2nd, get to know someone.

I think it was John Piper who said something to the effect, that one flesh and blood relationship with a person of another ethnicity, is worth a *hundred* conferences/books.

And Paul Tripp recently **wrote** . . .

“As we have gotten to know and love our black brothers and sisters, we have had our eyes opened and our hearts broken by the things they regularly have to deal with that we will never have to deal with just because of the color of our skin.”

3rd, **call it out.** When you see racism, react. When you hear it, respond.

I’m not talking about spouting off on Facebook, or throwing out a sub-tweet.

I’m talking about *personally* calling it out. When *you* see it or hear it. When someone makes a comment or joke in *your* presence. Call it out. (**Summary**)

Tell them you don’t approve, and they shouldn’t talk or act that way.

We must start doing the little things.

And last . . .

9. We must always do the big things.

Starting with repentance. If we’re going to see God do a work in our land on this issue, we have to **repent**. If we’re going to look to the interests of others, we have to repent.

For the things we’ve thought, the things we’ve said, and the things we’ve done.

Do you think *differently* about black people than you do white people? Repent.

Do you get *nervous* when a black person walks in the room? Repent.

Do you stereotype? Are you calloused toward all this? Do you demonize the police?

Think ill of white people? Repent.

Get before the Lord, ask forgiveness, and commit to change.

➤ 2nd, **express remorse.** When a person of color relates a racist experience or incident, tell them you’re sorry. Not that *you* did it, but that you’re sorry it happened.

You’re sorry they had to experience it. “I’m so sorry about that. *I hate* that you had to endure something like that.” Words of remorse go a long way.

In fact, I’m convinced that every single person of color in every generation needs to hear remorse about this. The wounds are too deep and the offense too fresh.

And it’s too easy to construe our silence as calloused disregard. Tacit endorsement.

They need to *hear* our remorse.

Like when Daniel prayed to God on behalf of the Israelites. Asking forgiveness and using pronouns like *we* and *us*. Daniel 9.

We have sinned and done wrong (5). *We have not listened to your servant the prophets* (6). *To us O LORD belongs open shame . . . because we have sinned against you* (8)

And on it goes for 20 verses. Daniel, repenting and expressing remorse for the people of whom he was a part. Present and past.

He didn’t do the wrong. He hadn’t forsaken the Lord. But his people sure did.

So let me just say, “If you’re a person of color, I’m sorry for the racism you’ve experienced in our country. Past or present.”

“I’m sorry for the background radiation you might feel in that respect.”

“I’m sorry for how it’s hurt you. Please forgive us.”

And I trust that in *our* church, you’ve felt *none* of that. And if you have, I’m particularly sorry.

We must always repent, and we must always express remorse.

And last, we must always **forgive**. That’s the other side of coin.

Apologies or not, if you’re a person of color, you need to forgive.

Healing won’t happen as long as whites don’t repent, and blacks don’t forgive.

There’s just no other way. No other way to deal with it, no other way to get past it, and no other way to have victory over it. You have to forgive.

Eph 4:31-32 says – *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice [hate]. [32] Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* (Col 3:13b)

If you’re a person of color, healing won’t happen if you allow a root of bitterness to grow toward those who are white, and water it every chance you get.

As a culture, we’ll *never* be able to make reparations for all the wrongs committed by previous generations. Ever.

Apologies or not, forgiveness must be extended. Otherwise you’ll be eaten alive by the very poison of anger that you wish on others. (**Summary**)

➤ We must always do the big things, and we must start doing the little things. Looking to the interests of others demands it. That’s *our* response to racism. Or should be. May God give us the grace, and find us faithful to use it.

Pray – [23] *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!* [24] *And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!* May you do that now, God. Forgiving our sins and blessing our oneness in Christ. In whose name we pray, Amen.