

Racism, the Critical Race Theory, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ¹

Acts 17:26 – From one man He created all the nations throughout the whole earth.

- i. Liberation “theology...puts into ordered speech the meaning of God’s activity in the world, so that the community of the oppressed will recognize that its inner thrust for liberation is not only *consistent with* the gospel but *is* the gospel of Jesus Christ... liberation theology has been broadened today to fit myriad other causes—from feminism to homosexuality to environmentalism” (9Marks, Steven Harris).
- ii. The critical race theory (CRT) is “an ideology that divides the world into oppressed groups and their oppressors and aims to liberate the oppressed. Sometimes called ‘Cultural Marxism,’ CRT borrows concepts from classical Marxism dividing the world into the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ and attempts to right the wrongs of previous generations through a redistribution of wealth and power” (T4G; Neil Shenvi PhD, UC-Berkeley).
- iii. Tonight’s Goal: To focus on how the Gospel, as displayed in the love and grace of the church, answers the sin of racism, to understand the Critical Race Theory, and to analyze this worldview through the lens of God’s Word.
 - **Colossians 2:3-4 – Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with plausible arguments.**
 - **Galatians 3:27-28 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.**

1. Foundational Truth: If we claim to be gospel-dominated, then we must be anti-racism (Ephesians 2).

- a. CRT engages the problems of racism in the West. We should all be willing to face this issue and think carefully and biblically about it, since it is a real sin.
- b. Even believers, including some whose teaching in many areas we rightly love, have gotten things wrong here.
- c. We have much to say as the church about these issues. Justifying faith, grounded in Christ’s cross, leaves us with no ultimate separation between once-ostracized people.

2. Foundational Truth: The practical unity (spiritual, racial, ethnic, etc.) that the Gospel creates is designed for display through the beauty of the church (Ephesians 3:1-6; 4:1-6).

- a. Jesus does not want us to be united spiritually without any clear demonstration of this unity. We come together in churches united around truth anchored in the gospel.
- b. Until that day when Christ establishes a new heavens and earth, the church seeks to demonstrate to the world through our vibrant fellowship that nothing unites like the blood of Christ.
- c. Christ’s love is what truly connects, truly links, and truly overcomes real sin and division.

¹ I would like to give credit to 9Mark’s *Biblical Theology and Liberation* (Steven Harris), the Gospel Coalition’s *Christ Rescued Haykin from the Clutches of Marxism* (Michael Haykin and Jeff Robinson, Thaddeus J. William’s *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice*, Anthony Bradley’s *Critical Race Theory Isn’t a Threat for Presbyterians*, Owen Strachan’s *Is Critical Race Theory Christian?*, Answer in Genesis’ *Critical Race Theory in the Church* (Brandon Clay and Frost Smith), George Schroeder’s *Seminary presidents reaffirm BFM, declare CRT incompatible*, the Gospel Coalition’s *The Incompatibility of Critical Theory and Christianity* (Neil Shenvi and Pat Sawyer), Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, Christianity Today’s *What is CRT and Should We Be Concerned* (Pat Sawyer), and Scott David Allen’s *Why Social Justice is Not Biblical Justice: An Urgent Appeal to Fellow Christians in a time of Social Crisis* for their assistance in preparing this material for CBC.

3. Foundational Truth: Racism, prejudice, and favoritism are serious sins (James 2:1-9).²

- a. The command to avoid discrimination (2:1). ¹ **My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.**
- b. An illustration of discrimination from the Christian assembly (2:2-4). ² **For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³ and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,” ⁴ have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?**
- c. The Biblical argument against discrimination and favoritism (2:5-11).
 - 1) Discrimination is inconsistent with God’s own actions (2:5) ⁵ **Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which He has promised to those who love Him?**
 - 2) Discrimination in the church is also inappropriate in view of men’s actions (2:6-7). ⁶ **But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?**
 - 3) Discrimination is a transgression of the royal law of Christ (2:8-9). ⁸ **If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.**

What does the Critical Race Theory teach?

1. CRT divides people based on color, money, and now, sexual orientation.

- a. CRT is a system of thought that fights for the reordering of both our racist worldview and world through activism.
- b. CRT aims to ignore (de-emphasize; cancel) voices in the so-called “dominant” majority. This majority most notably includes heterosexual, white, Christian males.
- c. One requirement of CRT is that those minority voices must also promote socially progressive ideas.
- d. CRT then has many categories and charts dividing people up into “dominant” and “less dominant” categories to discover your implied sinful privilege over others.

2. CRT understands that truth is changing or non-absolute.

- a. CRT has much in common with postmodern thought. This emphasizes truth based on personal experience and thus as relative: “my truth” and “your truth.” The idea of absolute truth (such embodied in inspired Scripture) is rejected.
- b. Late-stage postmodernism views some personal truths as more needful than others. The personal truth of historically disadvantaged people is truer than the personal truth of historically privileged people.

² Signed in Nov 2020 by 6 of the SBC Seminary Presidents: “In light of current conversations in the Southern Baptist Convention, we stand together on historic Southern Baptist condemnations of racism in any form and we also declare that affirmation of Critical Race Theory, Intersectionality, and any version of Critical Theory is incompatible with the Baptist Faith & Message.”

c. CRT uses personal truth to gain power in society. Connected to religion, the goal of the Gospel becomes to primarily address social inequities (Liberation Theology).

3. CRT wants dominant groups to own their collective guilt.

a. CRT divides people into groups; it not only holds privileged peoples responsible for righting *current* wrongs, but also holds those same privileged peoples responsible for righting *past* wrongs.

b. People who have seeming visible affinity with past oppressors—especially those with white skin who innately do—are ordered to repent for past wrongs.

c. Not only do they have guilt, but they must also repent of the actions of past peoples. They should take active steps to reorder their life, community, and country to atone for past wrongs (forms of penance).

d. Further laws should be completely reorganized, such that legal matters are not fundamentally about righting wrongs, but about the restructuring of society with power and income redistributed.

4. While not a new concept, CRT's strategy is to promote active "social justice."³

a. CRT leans heavily on power dynamics, viewing society as the allotment of power. In this sense CRT reflects Marxist thought,⁴ for each sees the world in terms of power dynamics and unjust institutions.

b. CRT divides the world into the 'haves' and 'have nots' and attempts to right the wrongs of previous generations through a redistribution of wealth and power.

c. CRT also teaches that systemic racism started with slavery in the early centuries of American history and continues into the present time primarily through the prison system, unfair housing, and police.

d. The embrace of CRT works together with intersectionality, the view that various minority groups of race, class, sexuality, disability, and gender have intersecting interests given their shared powerlessness.

e. "Social justice" occurs when such groups are given redistributed wealth, privilege, and power gained through activism and the use of force if necessary.

Conclusion: The Bible and the Critical Race Theory

1. CRT has shifted the center of truth away from objective standards to the subjective perspective of what are considered oppressed groups. Christians must remember where truth about man, guilt, sin, and salvation comes from: the Bible. God's Word is always true (John 17:17).

2. So how should the church respond to real racism that many have endured? Christians should look to God's Word to address sinful behavior through repentance and faith in Christ. As Christians, we ought to lovingly care for one another regardless of skin shade, social status, nationality, disability, or personal struggles: Love one another (John 13:34), build up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11), give preference to one another (Romans 12:10), encourage one another to good deeds (Hebrews 10:24), bear with one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), be hospitable to one another (1 Peter 4:9), and pray for one another (James 5:16).

³ Social justice stresses the redistribution of wealth and power through whatever means necessary; whereas biblical justice emphasizes the conformity to God's Law.

⁴ Michael Haykin (former Marxist and professor of church history at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary): "Marxism is essentially an economic explanation of history: History is moving toward a specific goal, namely, the classless state, after the destruction of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat, that is, the working class. The past has seen the evolution from monarchical and aristocratic rule to bourgeois capitalism, which will be replaced by the proletariat in due course. The shifts from one economic system of rule to another is usually attended by violence, since class structures won't normally relinquish power peacefully."

How to Pursue Racial Justice & Unity

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

V. THE GOSPEL

	Critical Race Theory	The Gospel
In a Nutshell:	A view that examines society through the lens of power, dividing people into oppressed and oppressor groups	The good news that Jesus, through His death, burial, and resurrection, offers hope and life to lost sinners.
Core Problem:	Whiteness; systems that oppress people of color	Sin; man's rejection of God's good rule
The Solution:	Become woke, do the work, be anti-racist	Jesus, repent of sin, allow the Spirit to change us
The Goal:	Utopia, everything being equitable. (We can accomplish this by our own efforts.)	Unity with God and each other through Jesus. (Utopia comes when King Jesus reigns.)
Our Identity:	Either oppressed or oppressor based on skin color	God's creation, loved by Him; as Christians, brothers & sisters in Christ
Truth & Morality:	The claim or assertions of oppressed people should be accepted without question	God determines what is right, and His Word is the ultimate truth.
Racism Is:	Racial prejudice plus institutional power	The sin of partiality revealed as racial prejudice
Who Can Be Racist:	White people because only they have power	Anyone because sin can arise in all of our hearts
Primary Emotions:	Guilt, anger	Sorrow and repentance leading to love, joy, and peace
The Path to Unity:	Overturn unjust systems; build collective power	God makes us one with Him and unifies us to each other as we yield to His sanctifying work in our hearts.