

Expository Files 2.5

May 1995

~~~~~

THE FRONT PAGE  
by Warren E. Berkley

### Racism: Using the Bible To Study An Old Problem

In recent months and years racial differences have been subjected to study and research by scientists, biologists and behavior scientists. Reports have been released in the press; books have been written, like THE BELL CURVE, by Murray and Herrnstein. There seems to be a trend here to do this research, write books and call for some change in educational or government policy.

What I want to say is: regardless of what we think about the validity of these reports and books, there is nothing that can justify prejudice, oppression, hatred or violence! We cannot allow any scientist or author to undermine our respect for our fellow man, and no book report or talk show should ever influence us to ignore what Jesus said: "love your neighbor as yourself!"

Perhaps it is time to re-visit this old problem, that just doesn't seem to go away.  
RACISM.

Brother Calvin Schlabach (Cincinnati, Ohio) edits a local bulletin, "EXCEL!" in which he recently dealt with the subject of racism ("In the image of God" Racism, Mar. 5, 1995). What is wrong with racial bigotry? Bro. Schlabach used the Scriptures to answer:

1. The racist has not properly grasped the concept that people are made in the image of God - all people! Gen. 1:26,27.
2. Racism is foolish, since God "made from one" every nation. Acts 17:26.
3. Racial bigotry is also ungodly, unlike God.

1 Sam. 16:7.

4. The "Golden Rule" forbids racial discrimination. Lk. 6:31;

Matt. 7:12.

5. Christians are commanded: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," (Matt. 22:39).

6. Those of us who are striving to recreate first century

Christianity have extra impetus to eschew racism.

Rom. 10:12.

Bro. Schlabach concluded: "With all that the Bible says about it, it is sad that racism is still thriving in our society, and it is a disgrace that traces of it can still be found in the church. Nonetheless, the children of God will treat all people, regardless of race, with the love, kindness, and respect they deserve, being made in the image of God."

James 2:1-13 is one of the strongest statements against racism in the New Testament. Though James does not deal directly with discrimination based on ethnic difference or skin color, the kind of discrimination James exposes is parallel to racism in many ways.

James paints a picture, then tells us what's wrong with the picture. The picture is, two kind of people come into the assembly. One appears to be poor, the other rich. Preference, honor and esteem is shown to the wealthy visitor, while second-class status is assigned to the poor man. In the New International Version, this is called "favoritism" and "discrimination."

What's wrong here? James says: You have become judges with evil thoughts ... you have insulted a man on the basis of nothing but his apparent economic status ... you have failed to love your neighbor ... you have sinned, and have failed to show mercy. The principle here has a variety of applications beyond economic status. When we discriminate against a person on the basis of any non-character trait we are wrong! A person's level of education; genealogical background; economic category; or skin color -- these are non-character traits, and when we make judgments about people based on things like this, we have sinned.

In the body of Christ, there is no racial supremacy. I can't imagine anybody disputing this point. For the Bible says that Christ died on the cross "to create in Himself one new man ... that He might reconcile them both," Jew and Gentile, "in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity." In God's family, the church, people from all races who have obeyed the gospel are "joined together," and so "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," (Eph. 2:14-22; Gal. 3:28).

Now consider, if God prohibits racial prejudice in His family, and there is to be no supremacy of one race over another, CAN WE ARGUE THAT HE WANTS THIS IN SOCIETY? Has God ordained something for society at large - that is reversed in His family? Does God want there to be contempt and favoritism and hatred in society? Are we to extend the "right hand of fellowship" to racial minorities "at church," but then shun them and be separate from them the rest of the week, out in the world?

No doubt, this truth must figure into our thinking about people who are different: in the body of Christ, there is no racial supremacy. And, of course, the gospel is for all!

\*\*\*\*\*

Your Comments?  
WEB47@AOL.com