

Race and the Gospel in 2018

From Jarvis Williams, New Testament Seminary Professor and Black Christian:

“In my view, at the moment, Christians in general must do a **better job at defining the gospel, race, and racial reconciliation**, and we must be intentional about pursuing racial reconciliation in our churches and communities. We must do a better job living out the gospel of racial reconciliation in community with real people in both church and society.

Second, Christians must be **honest about our racist past** to answer some of the **complicated questions in our racist present**. Moreover, progress will be difficult, if not impossible, if we deny that racism still exists—individually and systematically, in both church and society.

Finally, Christians and Christian churches must boldly press the **claims of the Christian gospel onto a racist society**, and we must be willing to stand against any and all forms of racism with legal and peaceful means whenever we see racism raise its ugly head.”

Ephesians 2:11-18

This passage contains three main ideas (and is in three paragraphs in your English Bible):

- 1) Our relationship with the Divine
- 2) What the power of Jesus allows us to “undo” in ourselves
- 3) What Jesus asks us to “do” from this point on

Ephesians 2:12 – *Remember at that time you were separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

That word for *Alienated* is only used three times in Bible, and all are used to describe the extreme separation from God a person experienced before Jesus Christ.

There has never been a racial tension greater than that of the Human Race verses its Creator.

Ephesians 2:16 – *and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*

That word for *reconcile* is also only used 3 times in total, and always refers to people being made right with God.

However, in this passage alone it is specifically stated that God might reconcile *both* (Gentiles / Jews), thereby emphasizing the specific cultural fracture being restored as part of the gospel truth.

This means that part of the gospel story includes human differences and broken relationships be restored on a big level. We must be willing to undo things in ourselves and in our past.

Ephesians 2:19 - *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.*

That word for *Fellow Citizens* is a completely unique word to the Bible, used only in this verse. It refers to being part of a city or a community, working alongside one another in daily life.

How well do you know the perspective of someone from another race? Do you know their motives before you evaluate their actions?

Revelation 5:9 is one of the pictures of God's fully completed kingdom. It will be quite the tapestry.

Homegroup Questions ~

- 1) Discuss Ephesians 2:11-22 and how you are impacted by either this sermon or the Gospel's description of reconciliation.
- 2) What does it mean for you, that before Christ you were far away from God?
- 3) This passage is abundantly clear that a part of what Jesus accomplished was to make it so that two cultures that were previously hostile could become friends and family. What have you done in the last month or two that breaks down any semblance of hostility in your life?
- 4) Are you comfortable with the Bible's description of a global, ethnically and culturally diverse church? Why or why not?