



REDEMPTION CHURCH, RACISM & THE GOSPEL

Affirmations & Denials

SUMMARY

God created one human race made in his image that contains a plurality of ethnicities designed to reflect the unity, equality, and distinctiveness within the Trinity. When humanity rebelled against God, the earliest consequences were division between God and humanity and between one another. Humanity, as a fruit of their ethnocentrism and egocentrism (including many Christians in history), assigned different “races” different degrees of humanity and dignity. Because God hates racial division and ethnic hostility, we grieve them and desire to help undo their harmful effects wherever they exist. In its fullness, the Kingdom of God will not have these hostile divisions. But until we experience the fullness of that Kingdom, Redemption Church aspires to be a foretaste of Christ’s multi-ethnic Kingdom at every level of membership and leadership. We rejoice that the gospel of Jesus provides the resources to not only heal humanity’s division from God, but also from one another.

PRELUDE

Redemption Church leadership created this document in order to facilitate discussions regarding an important but difficult issue. Therefore, please let this document begin or improve conversations, not end them. The issue of racism is not an abstract issue — it has real impact on the lives of people.

In the midst of a national conversation about the reality and extent of racism, we wanted to speak with clarity about what we think the Scriptures have to say about what has proven to be a confusing and painful topic. We are *not* attempting to advocate for specific public policies or solutions. Faithful Christians may see theological realities the same way while disagreeing about the best ways for a society to address complicated problems.

Because of the seriousness and complexity of this issue, this document is intentionally thorough and nuanced. It seems both impossible and undesirable to attempt to condense our understanding to a tweet-length summary.

While we intend this document to be unifying and clarifying, we know that many of the words below mean different things to different people. Therefore, we encourage you to read carefully and attempt to hear our hearts behind the text.

Racism and race-related sin are ultimately an affront to the Lord of all Creation, Jesus Christ. Because God begins judgment with his own house, we will purposefully give disproportionate attention to our own theological tradition: conservative evangelicalism.

ON OUR HOPE

1. **We affirm** that the only hope for humanity is the gospel of our Lord Jesus: his sinless life, his substitutionary death, his bodily resurrection, the coming of the Kingdom in his sending of the Spirit, and the ultimate renewal of all things at his Second Coming.

We deny secular humanism's assumption that humanity, operating apart from God, can bring about the full flourishing of society, and we further deny that Paradise is ultimately achievable until Christ's return.

2. **We affirm** the Already and Not-Yet reality of the Kingdom of God: the satanic reign of sin and death and the reign of God in Christ exist simultaneously and in hostility in our present moment in world history. This mixed-bag reality of our present moment in Biblical history gives us the dual identity of *listeners*, because of the doctrine of Common Grace, and *prophets*, because of the doctrine of Antithesis, as we engage with our pluralistic and secular world.

We deny naturalistic worldviews that minimize the role of God and Satan in society.

3. **We affirm** that all people will stand before God to be judged: the oppressed, oppressor, rich, poor, male, female, all ethnicities; and the need for everyone is to be found righteous in God's sight which is only possible through Jesus' substitutionary atonement; vengeance belongs to the Lord.

We deny that apart from faith in Jesus any person is safe from God's wrath.

ON OUR HUMANITY

4. **We affirm** that all of humanity is made in the image of God, that all humans share a common ancestry in Adam, and that those in Christ are being made into one new mankind.

We deny that any ethnicity has more or less value or dignity than any other ethnicity.

5. **We affirm** that God established a plurality of ethnicities, tribes, tongues, and nations designed to reflect the diversity-in-union within the Godhead, the body of Christ, the Church, and which will continue to do so in the New Creation.

We deny that ignoring the designed diversity within humanity is helpful or good.

6. **We affirm** that when one part of the body suffers, the whole suffers; Christians ought to weep with those who weep and lament with those who are oppressed.

We deny that we must agree with one another in order to weep with one another.

ON OUR SIN

7. **We affirm** that prejudice directed against someone based on their ethnicity or skin color is sin born in the human heart; it is rooted in self-righteousness, ethnocentrism, violates God's command to love your neighbor, and is ultimately evil and demonic.

We deny that racism can be sufficiently explained by secular sociological principles.

8. **We affirm** that sin is often unrecognized and unconscious: all people have blind spots. Those who follow Jesus ought to prayerfully and communally reflect on whether we harbor racial biases.

We deny that all white people are by definition racists.

9. **We affirm** that "systemic sin" or "structural sin" is present in society when sinful people create sinful laws and normalize sinful values; the legacy of those systems can often outlast and outlive them such that, even if corrected, sinful and oppressive policies and values can and often do have negative ripple effects for generations.

We deny that any category of sin can be merely understood in individualistic categories.

ON OUR HISTORY

10. **We affirm** that many white American Christians perpetuated, promoted, and profited from evil, racist systems for centuries, and, as members of one body united across time and space, we lament and grieve the sins of those who have come before us in church history, whether sins of commission or omission.

We deny that racism and slavery were invented in or only exist within America or evangelicalism.

11. **We affirm** and celebrate the vital role that many Christians played in combating and abolishing evils such as Southern Chattel Slavery and Jim Crow in the name of Jesus Christ.

We deny that the legacy of conservative evangelicalism is monolithically racist and passive.

12. **We affirm** that our nation's political leaders and thus our society have historically, on the basis of race, oppressed Black, Hispanic, Native American, Middle-eastern, and Asian communities and we lament and grieve the sins of our nation.

We deny that white people cannot also be poor and/or oppressed.

13. **We affirm** that many white Christians have been indifferent or calloused to the experience of non-white neighbors, including brothers and sisters in Christ, and to the legacy of mistreatment and oppression in our history.

We deny that every individual white Christian is directly complicit in this.

ON OUR PRESENT REALITY

14. We affirm the complexity of society and that all social issues are multifaceted.

We deny that all disparities amongst non-white and white people should be attributed to racism.

15. We affirm that many Black people and other people of color have more to overcome in order to succeed than many white people in part because of the legacy of unjust economic and social systems that have had lasting effects.

We deny that people should resign themselves and not take responsibility for their lives.

16. We affirm and grieve the pain experienced by many minorities that springs from being underrepresented in leadership, from being experienced as “other,” from ongoing suffering within racist environments, and from stereotyping and profiling.

We deny that every single negative interaction between white people and non-white people should be attributed to racism.

ON OUR RESPONSIBILITY

17. We affirm the Christian responsibility to pursue the welfare of our neighbors and our cities through means like evangelism, relationships, truth-telling, protesting, and legislative action in line with the Lordship of Jesus.

We deny that rioting and looting are legitimate means of justice.

18. We affirm God’s care of, love for, and patience with all people and that his preeminent vehicle of sharing that lovingkindness is through his Spirit-filled people.

We deny passive visions of Christianity that abdicate responsibility delegated to us by God.

19. We affirm the ability and need to acknowledge, lament, confess, and intentionally depart from the trajectory of sins of commission and omission in our church’s legacy.

We deny that such collective lament and confession directly implicates every believer’s soul in the sin of racism both now or in the past.

20. We affirm that reconciliation with and forgiveness from Jesus leads to reconciliation with and forgiveness towards our fellow humanity.

We deny that reconciliation is possible, with God or humanity, without confession, repentance, and, in many instances, repair.

BIBLICAL TEXTS FOR REFLECTION

Genesis 6:5-6 - The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. [6] And the LORD regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.

Exodus 1:8-11 - Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens.

Proverbs 13:23 - The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.

Proverbs 10:4 - A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Daniel 9:4-8 - I prayed to the LORD my God and made confession, saying, "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, [5] we have sinned and done wrong and acted wickedly and rebelled, turning aside from your commandments and rules. [6] We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. [7] To you, O Lord, belongs righteousness, but to us open shame, as at this day, to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, those who are near and those who are far away, in all the lands to which you have driven them, because of the treachery that they have committed against you. [8] To us, O LORD, belongs open shame, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against you.

Acts 6:1-5 - Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. [2] And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. [3] Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. [4] But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." [5] And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.

Ephesians 6:12 - For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Colossians 2:8 - See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

Galatians 2:11-13 - But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. [12] For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. [13] And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy.

Revelation 7:9-10 - After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, [10] and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

Revelation 21:23-27 - And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. [24] By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, [25] and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. [26] They will bring into it the glory and the honor of the nations. [27] But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Romans 12:14-18 - Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. [15] Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. [16] Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. [17] Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. [18] If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.