

Statement on Racism

FEB Central Ministries affirms the equal value, dignity, and worth of all human beings (regardless of their ethnic or racial background) because all people have been created in God's image to know and reflect Him to the world.

According to the Bible, this image has been marred by the entrance of sin into the world (Romans 1:18-23). One of the immediate outcomes of humanity's broken relationship with God in the fall was the fracturing of human relationships (Genesis 3:7-24; 4:8). Our failure to love God first led to a failure to properly love one's neighbour. Racism (a form of discrimination that values and privileges some groups of people above others and denies the personhood of some based on skin colour, descent, national or ethnic origin) is one expression of this fracturing of human relationships that flows from our broken relationship with God. Racism is an offense against God's character and law in at least three ways: First, it is an offense against the equal dignity with which God created all humans. The truth that God made all people in His image means that an attack upon another human in thought, word, or action is an attack upon the Creator Himself (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9). To treat another human being as inferior to us because of their race or ethnicity is a very serious sin against the God who created and imprinted in that life His very likeness. A second way that racism is a sin against God is that it is a failure to love our neighbour as we ought to (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:36-40). When Jesus was asked to define the meaning of loving our neighbour, he pointed to the sacrificial care of a person for another of a different race and religion (Luke 10:25-37). He calls us to treat people of other races and groups with the same care and respect we would give to ourselves or members of our own group. Lastly, racism is a sin against the truth of the work of God in Jesus Christ and the gospel. The gospel of God's grace and the truth that Jesus died for all people, regardless of race, gender, or social status, reveals that we all stand level before the cross and are equally valuable in God's eyes and in need of His mercy and grace. The gospel reveals that no one can perform their way to acceptance before God and we are all in need of the person and work of Jesus' death and resurrection. When the Apostle Paul confronts Peter about his racial prejudice (Galatians 2:14-16), he does not appeal to the image of God or to love of neighbour but to the fact that his actions are not in line with the gospel. The gospel reveals no divine favoritism of race or ethnic group but rather it is for all people, everywhere who stand equally in need before God of His grace. Tim Keller points out, "The Christian Gospel is that **I am so** flawed that Jesus had to die for me, yet **I am so loved** and valued that Jesus was glad to die for me." The gospel points to our common need and value before God as human beings.

Therefore, we affirm that all racism (prejudice against another) is sin which requires repentance and forgiveness. We also acknowledge that God in the gospel has called us to do justice in our world by seeking to push back against all forms of hate, prejudice and racism through our love

of neighbour and through the proclamation of the gospel (Micah 6:8; Galatians 6:15). Racism affects every person and people group and only the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the inside out transformation of the Holy Spirit can enable humans to love each other more fully and fairly, the way God intended.

As believers in Jesus Christ, we should primarily live out this racial justice by striving to do God's will on earth as it is in heaven, recognizing and celebrating our diversity in unity as a gift from God. This reveals itself not only by not showing partiality to any other person, but also by having special concern for those who may be vulnerable to unjust treatment. The Bible teaches that God has a special place in his heart to protect the rights of those without power and influence in the world (the widow, orphan, foreigner, and poor -- essentially, those on the fringes of society - Zechariah 7:10). Proverbs 31:8-9 says "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves..." While God values all lives equally, He recognizes that in a fallen world the abuse of power means that some need special care and protection. This should begin in the church by a proper recognition of our equality in creation and the new creation, refusing to show favoritism because of race, gender or social position (Galatians. 2:14-15; 3:26-29; James 2:1-9). It continues in the church if God's people give special care to those who are vulnerable to the abuse of power. The early church took steps to protect those who might be at risk because they were without resources and influence (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:1-16; James 1:27). We too should advocate for those who are weak and vulnerable to the misuse of power in a fallen world (Psalm 41:1; Proverbs 31:8-9). This can be done by sharing our resources with others, first in the church and then outside the church. It can also be done by sharing our lives with others in relationship, helping them to become self-sustaining, acquiring the resources and influence needed to flourish. And finally, this can be done through our influence of cultural structures (inside and outside the church) that disadvantage those without influence and power (e.g., 1 Timothy 1:8-11). We do this differently than the world by subversively overturning fallen structures through Christlike love and service even to those who treat us unjustly. Only as we are servant leaders following Jesus down into greatness, giving our rights away like He did, is there hope for our world to become more of what God created it to be. We should not meet hate with more hate or prejudice with more prejudice, but we should meet hate with love and prejudice with kindness, recognizing that only in the transformation of the love of God in Jesus Christ is there hope for the world.

As Christians we recognize that the perfecting of such fairness and justice will not happen until Jesus brings his final salvation at His Second Coming (Revelation 21:4). But while we look forward to that blessed hope, we should seek to move towards this final justice now by the spread of the gospel and growth of God's New Creation in the world. The beauty of the gospel is that, in Christ, those who were once far away have now been brought near (to the Lord and to each other) through the ultimate injustice, the unjust murder of the perfect Son of God (Ephesians 2:12-13). Through His servant leadership, Jesus has turned the greatest injustice into the greatest act of love and hope for the world, to unite us all in our diversity. As such, when we believe in Jesus Christ, we are part of God's justice now in the New Creation and are a beachhead in an unjust world. We stand as one before the Lord – equals and co-heirs with

Christ in a new humanity (Ephesians 2:14-17). And what unites believers in Jesus Christ is far greater than anything that could separate or divide us (Ephesians 2:19-22). At the same time the Bible celebrates a beautiful diversity that exists within this unity as part of God's love. The New Jerusalem will be marked by the glory of the "nations" and before the throne of God there will be a great multitude from "every nation, tribe, people and language" worshiping the one who sits on the throne and the Lamb (Revelation 21:26; 7:9). We longingly look forward to this day when God's final salvation and justice will be manifested.

Because of these great truths, the church of Jesus Christ has the unique opportunity to demonstrate uncommon and joyful unity through diversity before a lost, deeply fractured, and dying world that desperately needs the healing that only the gospel of Jesus Christ can bring.

Soli Deo Gloria