

Sermon Notes: Privilege & Accountability

Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday – January 17, 2021

David A. Renwick

National Presbyterian Church, Washington, DC

Last Sunday – Romans 1

A. Maintaining the Tension

- The Grace of God and Human sin/weakness
- Service over Force
- Listening over “Being Right”

Today – Romans 2-3

B. The depth & Perniciousness of Sin

I. Human Blindness to sin – Hard to see if we are privileged

→ e.g., Jesus and the Rich Ruler (Matthew 19:16-22)

→ e.g. God’s ancient Chosen People (Romans 2-3)

Romans 2:10-19

A Relentless Exposing the worst of sin *in God’s own people*

Using quotes (Psalms, Isaiah, Proverbs) *from their Bible*

II. Human Blindness to Sin – Hard to Admit when we are privileged

a. Tendency to create Self-Esteem via Comparisons with others

b. Tendency for *Excuses, Exceptions, Caveats* for our special case

e.g., God gave US the Bible! We know God and God’s will

We have the signs of God’s love (circumcision, baptism, etc)

c. Paul:

- Having and doing are two different things (Romans 2)
- Our Bible says (Rom.2:24/Isaiah 56:2) “*My name is blasphemed among the gentiles because of you!*”
- NO EXCEPTIONS: *ALL are accountable to God* (3:19)

III. Privilege means More Accountability

a. Is God’s Name blasphemed in the Secular world because of us?

-- the link in recent riots to Christian faith

-- Not dwelling on comparisons or “distancing”

-- the need to seek God’s help to work harder to be faithful witnesses for Christ

b. Are we more blind to “White Privilege” than we see, admit, realize?

-- the Tendency to superiority (more prevalent than to “supremacy”)

-- The Excuses (as in Romans 2-3): we were here first, we made the society great, we created and interpreted the law . . .

IV. THE PRAYER

PRAYER FOR OURSELVES & NATION

Lord have mercy

Help us to see how blessed and privileged we are!

Do whatever you can – do whatever you must -- with our lives so that in this present darkness

the light of Christ will not flicker

but shine more brightly than ever

even through us

Show us our sin & show us our savior

& Bring us a new vision – a new repentance and renewal

To be Christ’s ambassadors in our city and world!!

“A Place to Start” Reading List -- Choose one of the following . . .

A Place to start for Race Issues Skeptics:

- John Piper **Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and the Christian**, 2011 (*well know very conservative Christian pastor, theologian and author, whose congregation is committed to racial reconciliation*)
- U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (R) & former Rep. Trey Gowdy (R) **Unified: How Our Unlikely Friendship Gives Us Hope for a Divided Country**, 2018.

A Place to Start for Race Issue Proponents

(*Two Conservative Black authors/speakers on video*)

- Thomas Sowell (Stanford, Hoover Institute) “**A Conflict of Visions: The Two Visions**”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGvYqaxSPp4&list=PL43DD7F5427E0D629&app=desktop>

- Voddie Baucham, “**Ethnic Gnosticism**” (popular Christian teacher)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ip3nV6S_fYU

Videos online

One hour:

- **Mr. Civil Rights -- Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP** (2104 Documentary). See also the Movie version: **Marshall** (2017)

Longer:

- **Reconstruction: America After the Civil War** (2019 PBS) Henry Louis Gates, Jr.
- **The Color of Compromise** -- video series by Jemar Tisby (Amazon Prime, \$47.99)

Books – General

Shorter

- John Perkins **One Blood: Parting Words to the Church about Race and Love**, 2018. *(Read and discussed by the NPC Session, Fall, 2020. Short. Christian. Accessible. Challenging.*

Longer

- Isabel Wilkerson, **Caste: The origins of Our Discontents, 2020** *(Present bestseller. For me -- the best explanation of our present predicament)*

Books & Movie – Prison Ministry

- Bryan Stevenson **Just Mercy** (2014)

Books -- US History and Race

- Isabel Wilkerson, **The Warmth of Other Suns**, 2010 (story of the great migration north)
- David W. Blight, **Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom** (2018)
- Jemar Tisby, **The Color of Compromise**, 2019. (Author is a young graduate of conservative Reformed Seminary, Jackson, MS)

For a longer list – see “Race Matters” series, Summer 2020, at www.nationalpres.org (archives)