I would like to ask you to turn with me in the New Testament to the book of Ephesians, the 2nd chapter. Here the apostle Paul speaks of one of the worse sins that mankind can be afflicted with.

We know that mankind can do many great things. In fact, if we look back at the 20th century, I often wonder what event the historians will consider to be the greatest event of this century. My prediction would be landing men on the moon. Maybe there would be something else, but, certainly, that has to be a great accomplishment in the history of the human race. Maybe it's going to be something else like discovering lasers or inventing computers, or satellites or something like that. But there have been many accomplishments in the 20th century.

But what would you describe as the greatest failure of the 20th century? What would be the biggest problem that we have faced in the 20th century? We can look at some of the awful events that have taken place over the last 95 years, and I suppose the worse was World War II. And yet, begin looking at the causes of World War II. As we look at the European front, we see that the cause there was racism: the German people considered themselves to be superior to the Jews and superior to the blacks and superior to the gypsies and the Polish and the Russians. In fact, as the Aryan race, they considered themselves to be superior to all other ethnic groups. It was racism that began the war on the European front!

We look at the Pacific theater and again historians have identified this pride in one's race, this pride in one's ethnic group as being the cause for that part of World War II. What I'm leading up to is the idea, at least as I see the 20th century, that the greatest problem that we have had this century is racism! It is pure and simple prejudice that has afflicted this century in the worst and most awful way.

What is prejudice? The word "prejudice" actually means making a pre-judgment; that is, before the facts are considered, we already have our minds made up. It has been said that prejudice is a great time saver, because you don't have to read the facts. So it doesn't matter what the facts are, what the background is; prejudice means that we make our minds up, regardless or before reading the facts of the matter.

When I was growing up I knew people, personally, who said, "My great-grandfather was a democrat, my grandfather was a democrat, my father is a democrat and I'm a democrat!" And it didn't matter what you said to people like that, that's how they were
going to vote! I'm sure that in this part of the country, there were people who said, "My great grandfather was a republican, and my grandfather was a republican..." and so forth. So again, with many people, it does not matter what the facts are, there's no research, there's no reading; some people just make up their minds regardless of the facts.

Sometimes we say, "You can't judge a book by its cover." We know how true that is. I've got some old books in my office that have beautiful covers on them. Apparently, back 100 years ago people spent a great deal of time designing covers of books. I have some that are gorgeous. And yet those books are some of the most boring books I have in my office. On the other hand, I have books that I've had to photocopy, because they're out of print, and so here they are, just on white photocopy paper and they've got just a cheap ten cent cardboard notebook enclosing them. And yet those are some of the most exciting books that I have. It's very true in this life: you can't judge a book by its cover. And yet, when it comes to the subject of racism, that basically is what racism is: judging people by the color of their skin or their ethnic characteristics.

May we consider this affliction of the human race, known as racism. I'd first like to discuss this: how bad is racism in our country today? Second, what is the cause of racism? And, finally, what does the Bible say? We see in the news that one of the most vicious wars going on is in Bosnia. When you look at the details of exactly what they are fighting for, isn't that a modern day war that is based on racism, on ethnic pride? As the Serbs try to kill the Croats who try to kill the Muslims who try to kill the Serbs? Somebody might say, "Yeah, but that doesn't apply to the United States."

Let's talk about this country and the subject of racism. Many of us grew up during the Civil Rights demonstrations of the 1950's and the 1960's. There was feeling of optimism then, where many people thought that things were going to get better. I think they did get better for a while, and yet, things now seem to be deteriorating when it comes to racism. I have a newspaper article, which says that since 1990, the number of white supremacist groups in this country has been growing by about 25% per year.

There's a book you ought to read; I read it a while ago. Written from a Christian point of view, we would say, it is entitled The Coming Race Wars. It is a very frightening book. As the author points out on page after page in the book, the racial problem in the United States is getting worse. And if you extend it logically out into the future, then it may be that the time will come, not too far down the road, when this country will disintegrate into race wars. And we say, well, that's down south, not in the north. I can't tell you how many surveys I have seen indicating the city in the United States that is more segregated than any other in the country. Beloved, it is not Atlanta. It is not Birmingham, it's not Dallas, it is not Nashville. It is Chicago, Illinois.

An article in the paper, "Hate Gang Shows It's Face", is about an attack that two young men (ages 17 and 18) made upon a 16 year old white boy in the parking lot of a restaurant. The reason they attacked the 16 year old was that his best friend was a black young man, aged 15, and they didn't think he should be friends with a black person. It says, "These teens were not Chicago street gang want-to-be's. The tattoos they bore were
not associated with groups known for drive-by shootings and selling drugs. This is believed to be the first charge for white supremacist violence in the County. These two young men say they attacked a 16-year-old Caucasian boy because of his friendship with an African-American teenager, age 15. They flashed Nazi hand salutes and shouted 'White Power' and expletives at the 16 year old who was accompanied by his friend…” The sixteen-year-old got the worse of the fight, some abrasions and bruises. The two older boys were charged with aggravated battery and mob action. They had tattoos that said "White Power". They were card-carrying members of the Aryan nation supremacist group. The police say they know of a number of white supremacists in this county.

I have a friend whose husband is a real estate agent. She recently told me that her husband was very depressed because he was trying to sell houses and there were so many white people who refuse to sell their house to black families. They would just flatly refuse to do so and he was very upset about this problem that was developing in the area. We think the county we live in is very modern and advanced politically; how can racism exist where we live?

I have a theory on how it can come into existence. It is taught by parents, to their children. When children are little, they're not racist. They don't care what color another kid's skin is. How do they become racist? It is by being taught to hate those who are different... by their parents.

You may remember a great play and a great movie "South Pacific." It had tremendous music by Rogers and Hammerstein. There's a song that always haunts me. It is entitled, "You've got to be Carefully Taught." Remember that song? It has two stanzas to it.

You've got to be taught to hate and fear,
You've got to be taught from year to year.
It's got to be drummed in your dear little ear,
You've got to be carefully taught,
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught to be afraid,
Of people whose eyes are oddly made,
And people whose skin is a different shade.
You've got to be carefully taught.
You've got to be carefully taught.

You've got to be taught before it's too late
Before you are six or seven or eight,
To hate all the people your relatives hate.
You've got to be carefully taught,
You've got to be carefully taught.
That's the source of racism in our county: as little children are growing up and see their parents' behavior, and what their parents teach them directly and indirectly. It is passed on from one generation to another.

What about the cause of racism? Did you know that there are some people who are foolish enough to say that the Bible teaches us to be racist? When I was growing up I kept hearing people whisper about the curse of Cain. That this is where black people came from, the curse of Cain. And later, I started reading the Bible and I found that number one, the Bible does not call it a curse but a sign, on Cain, in Genesis 4:15. When you read what the Bible says there, Cain had killed his brother, Abel, and Cain was terrified he thought someone was going to kill him. He begged God for mercy, to do something so people wouldn't kill him. God said He'd give him a sign and this would stop people from killing him. And people say, "Well, this is where black people came from." Oh, beloved, that is not at all what that passage says! Not at all! It was some kind of sign on Cain that stopped other people from killing him. We have no idea what it was. That certainly does not support racism.

And then I heard people sort of whispering about the curse of Ham, that this is where the other races came from, that they were descendants of Ham. And so I looked that up in Genesis 9, and again that's not correct. It was not the curse of Ham; it was a curse on Ham's son, Canaan. We read that after the flood, Noah got drunk and took all of his clothes off and his son, Ham, ridiculed him. And Noah put this curse on Ham's son, Canaan, that Canaan would be a servant to other people. There's no evidence that Noah had the power to carry out that curse; he was still half drunk. It has nothing to do with any kind of skin color here. Some might say this where the Canaanites came from. It could be, they were servants of other people once the Israelites entered the land of Canaan. But that has nothing at all to do with racial prejudice or where our modern day races have come from.

Where has racism come from? It comes from Satan! And the sin that is involved here is a foolish pride that people have in their own particular race. It is nothing but the sin of pride. Someone might say, "Well, aren't you proud to be a white person?" My answer to that is, "I'm not a white person. My skin isn't white, is it? I think that this is a beautiful shade of beige here, but it's not white! If my face were the color of a piece of typing paper, I'd be in the intensive care center of some hospital, and there'd be someone giving me the last rites!" Are we truly white people? No, no more than black people are truly black. We are all different shades of brown and tan and others. Am I proud that I have hazel eyes instead of blue eyes? Is the fact that I have hazel eyes make me superior to someone with green eyes? Is a green eyed person superior to a brown eyed person? This goes around and around; we're talking about external things. We ought not to judge by these external things.

The Bible says, "God sees not as a man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart." That's from I Samuel 16:7, where Judge Samuel had been sent to appoint a new king and finally they got down to David. And Samuel said, "You mean this is it, this is the new king?", and God said, "God does not see as a man sees for
man looks at the outward appearance and God looks on the heart”. In other words, God is saying, "Samuel, his heart is right. This is a godly young man here; he's going to be the new king. Forget about his other brothers, it's David who will be the new king.” That's what the Bible says, therefore, on this subject of judging by skin color and by other racial characteristics.

Well, let us look more at what the Bible says. I believe, truly, that we could spend the next two hours looking at scriptures that condemn racism. If we had time, we could look at Numbers 12. We find there that Moses had married a black woman from Ethiopia or the ancient country of Cush. A Jew with a black woman. The sister of Moses, Miriam, went berserk! She rebelled, she said it was awful, she objected strongly to that marriage and do you remember what God did to Miriam? Struck her with leprosy! Moses intervened on behalf of his sister Miriam, and because of what Moses said, God just gave her leprosy for one week. But it's obvious that God was very upset with the attitude that Miriam had.

It would be good if we could discuss the golden rule. This one verse, Matthew 7:12. If everyone on earth followed it, this one verse would eliminate racism right at this moment and we'd never hear of it again. "Whatever you want others to do for you, do so for them." The golden rule would stamp out racism.

But I want to call your attention to two particular passages. The first is Ephesians 2. In the first century it was not so much black and white, but it was Jew and Gentile. Two racial groups were at each other's throats constantly. In Ephesians 2, the apostle Paul addressed the question of first century racism between the Jews and the Gentiles. Beginning in verse 11, and down through verse 16:

"Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called 'Uncircumcision' by the so-called 'Circumcision', which is performed in the flesh by human hands - remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity."

There's a lot in those verses. And notice, basically, that Paul is saying that here were two groups that used to be separated. Christ tore the barrier down. They now become one person in the body of Christ. There is not to be racism between Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ. Christ put that hatred to rest. It is gone. It has been destroyed by the death of Christ on the cross. Paul, therefore, was making a point that is directly parallel to our situation today with racism.
Would you look at a second passage, please: James, Chapter 2. The word "racism" is not used anywhere in the Bible, but I think you will see a second scripture here that is so like our situation today; that is, showing partiality and judging by appearances. James 2:1-9:

"My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man with dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who's wearing the fine clothes and you say, 'You sit here, in the good place', and you say to the poor man, 'You stay over there or sit down by my footstool,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs to the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing well."

Notice verse 9: "But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors."

Beloved, did you notice that three times in that passage he warned against showing partiality? So here's the situation: a guy drives up our driveway, he's in a Mercedes. And he's wearing an expensive suit that has an expensive label in it. And he's wearing leather boots and he has a two-carat diamond and he has a Rolex watch, and we say, "You come up here and sit in the front." But somebody else comes in and he got here by riding the bus. And his clothes are filthy and torn. Maybe he needs a bath in the worst way and his hair is not combed and he hasn't shaved in a few days and we say, "You sit back there in the back. In fact, we don't want you to get our pew cushions dirty, you just sit there on the floor." James says here that is an awful sin. It is showing partiality and we are condemned by our actions if we participate in that sin.

There's always something about us that encourages us to be that way, to want everyone to dress the way we dress. And we want everyone to talk with the same accent that we have. And we want everyone to have the same shade of skin color that we have, and to look like we look. But remember what God said to Samuel, "God sees not as a man sees, for man looks on the outward appearance but God looks at the heart." It's not that outward appearance; it's the person's heart. It's his behavior, to the extent that he is a godly person, that we respect him, not based on his skin color or the clothes he's wearing.

Based on these scriptures, beloved, my conclusion is that racism is antithetical to the Christian faith. It is the opposite of the Christian faith. If you have committed this sin in the past, I hope you have asked forgiveness for it. If you are committing this sin at this time, I hope that these scriptures will give you something to think about. And if you plan to be a racist in the future, remember what Paul said in Ephesians 2 and what James said in James 2.
What am I doing to stop racism in this country? The only thing I know to do is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Demonstrations aren't going to do it. Riots aren't going to do it. Writing your congressman isn't really going to do it, in the long run. What will change racism in this country is to work upon the hardest object known to mankind - the human heart. And there is only one thing that is able to soften the human heart and that is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Several weeks ago, my wife and I were on a plane and I was seated next a white woman. Her black husband and their two kids were across the aisle. I was thinking, how I could get a conversation going about religion? Finally, I turned to her and asked, "Have you found much discrimination, concerning your interracial marriage?" Well, she was willing to talk about that. She said, "At first, there was not. But lately, it has been getting worse and worse." I thought, "Here's where I can get in a word about the church." I said, "Don't you think this is due to the moral disintegration of the country?" I thought this was a way we could get into religion! She said, "No, it's not that. It's the poor economy that is causing this."

Well, the plane was bouncing around and I had my eye on the carry-on bag that was right in front of me, because it was an awful flight and I thought I was going to be sick! When we finally landed, there was this huge round of applause for the pilot; that's how bad the landing was. So, I didn't want to get in a long discussion with her because we were getting bounced around and were about to land. But I was thinking, "It's not the economy." There are poor people out of work who are not racists. There are rich people with the best jobs in the country who are racist. And vice versa! It is not the economy that has brought on increased racism in the last few years. It is the moral disintegration of this country.

If the country went back to Jesus Christ we would not have the Ku Klux Klan anymore. There would no longer be the Black Panthers, the White Aryans, or the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. There would no longer be any skinheads because the prophecy has been fulfilled in the Lord's church:

"They will hammer their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation and never again will they learn of war. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb. And the leopard will lie down with the kid. And the calf and the young lion and the fattling, together; and a little boy shall lead them. And the cow and the bear will graze together and the young will lie down together and the lion will eat straw like an ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of a cobra and the winged child will put his hand into the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy, in my holy mountain, for the earth will be full in the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

Beloved, those words of Isaiah were not about some 1000-year reign in the future; those words were about the Lord's church. It is in the body of Christ that the lion lays down with the lamb. It is in the body of Christ that we hammer our swords into plowshares and never again learn of war. It is in the body of Christ that racism is not supposed to exist.
Therefore, the answer to racism is to continue spreading the gospel, converting people to Jesus Christ as they are baptized for the forgiveness of their sins and enter into the body of Christ. One of the sins that has to be left behind is racism. If it is not left behind, then there is not serious repentance going on. The body of Christ, the gospel of Christ; those are the only two answers that will end the problem of racism.