RACE IN AMERICA by Derrick Young

A few years ago, a young, white brother in Christ and I were discussing the sin of racism. After I’d shared some of my experiences contending with racial hatred, he asked me “What’s the worst thing that happened to you?” After considering all the unfairness—epithets, fights, threats, (all from the age of nine, mind you)—for me, the worst thing was being treated as if I didn’t exist. Anyone who is blind to my humanity will allow himself to treat me inhumanely.

As in any group, not all share my exact experiences, perspective or conclusion, but if there’s one instance of racial hatred coming from one who professes Christ, that’s one too many. Unfortunately, there have been and continue to be sinful acts with a racial element that are named among those who profess to be owned by Christ.

In Luke 10, after Jesus thanks the Father (v.21) for having “hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children,” we’re introduced to a lawyer, an expert in the Law of Moses, who questioned Jesus about how he could receive eternal life. Jesus’ answer is a question: “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?”

Being a Christian should indicate that we know the Law of Christ. We’ve heard and read Scriptures such as Genesis 1:26-27, Acts 17:24-28, and Leviticus 19:17-18. Now, challenge yourself as you investigate Jesus’ teaching in Luke 10:25-37. This Lawyer correctly understands that he must love God with his all, *and* love his neighbor as himself. Jesus then directs him to “do this, and you will live.” Scripture reveals that the lawyer then sought to justify himself by asking, “And who is my neighbor?” This context suggests that the lawyer wasn’t doing—or didn’t want to do—what Jesus commanded him to do.

Sadly, there are examples those calling themselves “Christian” yet refusing to repent of the sin of discriminating against another because of skin color. I’ve specifically experienced white people in the church committing this sin against "black and brown people” and refusing to repent. But consider a particular condemnation in the Luke 10 text. Have you ever considered the victim? Regardless of cultural background, the sickening scene of inaction or unwillingness to help a man who was beaten, robbed and left half dead is a tremendous failure. It’s abhorrent behavior from an intercessor like a priest, or a holy assistant like the Levite. Compassion means suffering with another (weep with those who weep, for example).

The priest and the Levite in this story knew the Law and what was expected of them. The victim may have had expectations also, at least of a fellow human being willing to help. The Samaritan saw the effects of a wrong, had compassion (suffered with the suffering) *and* acted. He took the victim’s burden and made it his own debt (v.34-35). Jesus acted in such a way for all mankind. So, can a brother be justified and yet violate James 2:1-13 or 1 John 3:11-18? It’s bad enough to sin by hating me because of the color of my skin. Racial hatred is sin. To be willfully blind and insensitive to my suffering from racial hatred is also violation against revealed commands, and given America’s history, is it so difficult to believe that black and brown brethren like me feel as if we’ve just been passed by? Christians don’t get to stand on the sidelines, folks (Eph. 5:11). Let us never fail to make application of God’s word to ourselves. Challenge yourself. How do *you* read it?

***Editor’s Note:*** *After writing the articles that appear on the front page of this issue, it was suggested that it might be beneficial to look at this issue from another perspective—from one who has personally been the victim of racism. So, I asked my good friend and brother in Christ, Derrick Young, to write his thoughts on this subject. Derrick currently serves as one of the elders of the good church in Bridgeview, Illinois, a near suburb of Chicago.*