



RACIAL SUPREMACY AND DISCRIMINATION: A CRITICAL EVALUATION IN THE LIGHT OF ROMANS 10:12

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Abstract

This study explores the theological and socio-historical implications of Romans 10:12 as a critique of racial supremacy ideologies. Through an exegetical analysis of the biblical text, the research investigates the Paul's message of equality between Jews and Gentiles, emphasizing its radical challenge to the prevailing ethnic hierarchies of the 1st-century Roman Empire. The paper situates Paul's teachings within their historical context, and traces the enduring impact of such interpretations in relation to colonialism, slavery, and racial discrimination. The study employs a combination of historical-critical methods of exegesis as well as the rhetorical and analytical methods, analyzing ancient sources and modern theological perspectives to demonstrate how Paul's message calls for the dismantling of racial hierarchies in both ancient and contemporary contexts. Moreover, this paper argues that Romans 10:12 provides a biblical framework for challenging modern racial supremacy ideologies and promoting a more inclusive Christian theology that transcends ethnic and racial divisions.

Keywords: Racial Supremacy, Romans, Colonialism, Theology

Introduction

Racial supremacy ideologies continue to present one of the most challenging obstacles to human dignity and social justice in contemporary society. Despite significant progress in civil rights legislation and social attitudes, racial hierarchies remain deeply embedded in social, political, and religious institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Alexander, 2012). These hierarchies manifest through both overt expressions of white supremacy and more subtle forms of structural racism that perpetuate systemic inequalities (Wodak, 2015). Within Christian communities, these ideologies have historically found both support and opposition, making theological analysis of racial supremacy particularly significant for understanding and addressing its contemporary manifestations (Cone, 2011; Jennings, 2010). The theoretical framework for this study integrates critical race theory (CRT) with biblical hermeneutics and postcolonial theology. CRT provides essential tools for analyzing how racial hierarchies are maintained through legal and social structures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), while postcolonial theology offers insights into how religious texts can be reinterpreted to challenge colonial and racist ideologies (Tinker, 1993). This interdisciplinary approach allows for a nuanced examination of how biblical texts can inform contemporary discussions of racial justice.

The Apostle Paul's declaration in Romans 10:12 that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all" presents a powerful theological framework for



critiquing racial supremacy ideologies. This statement, radical in its first-century context, continues to challenge contemporary assumptions about racial hierarchy and divine favouritism (Wright, 2015; Dunn, 2009). While scholars have extensively analyzed this passage's implications for Jewish-Gentile relations in early Christianity (Sanders, 1977; Jewett, 2007; Kanu 2020), less attention has been paid to its potential application as a theological critique of modern racial supremacy ideologies. The historical misuse of Christian scripture to justify racial hierarchies, particularly during periods of colonialism and slavery, adds urgency to the task of developing robust theological responses to racial supremacy (Hawkins, 1997; Mills, 1997). Religious institutions played a significant role in both supporting and opposing racial hierarchies, creating a complex legacy that continues to influence contemporary Christian responses to racism (Raboteau, 2004). As Emerson and Smith (2000) note, Christian communities continue to struggle with racial divisions, often reflecting rather than challenging broader societal patterns of segregation and inequality.

This present study employs a multi-method approach combining: historical-critical exegesis to understand the original context and meaning of Romans 10:12; rhetorical analysis to examine Paul's argumentative strategies; social-scientific criticism to explore the text's implications for community formation; and contemporary hermeneutical approaches informed by liberation theology and critical race theory. The study tries to situate Paul's universal vision within both its historical context and contemporary applications in order to contribute to ongoing discussions about Christianity's role in addressing racial inequality. The investigation builds upon recent scholarship in critical race theory and postcolonial theology, while focusing specifically on the theological implications of Paul's assertion of equality in Christ. Drawing from both ancient sources and modern theological perspectives, this paper argues that Romans 10:12 provides a foundational biblical framework for challenging modern racial supremacy ideologies and promoting a more inclusive Christian theology. Through careful exegetical analysis and contemporary application, this study demonstrates how Paul's radical message of equality continues to offer relevant insights for dismantling racial hierarchies in both religious and secular contexts.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study integrates Critical Race Theory (CRT), Postcolonial Theology, and Biblical Hermeneutics to critically evaluate racial supremacy and discrimination in the context of Romans 10:12. This interdisciplinary approach facilitates a comprehensive analysis of Paul's declaration that "there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all" within both ancient and modern settings (Wright, 2015; Dunn, 2009). This proposed framework seeks to explore Romans 10:12 as a theological foundation for anti-racist and inclusive Christian theology by examining how historical interpretations of this biblical text have been both appropriated to justify and resisted against racial discrimination.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

Critical Race Theory (CRT) includes analytical tools to examine how racial hierarchies are upheld within legal and social systems (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). By addressing the perpetuation of racial supremacy through systemic inequalities, CRT sheds light on how ideological structures can sustain racial divisions in secular and religious contexts (Alexander, 2012; Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In Christianity, racialized interpretations of scripture have historically contributed to systemic inequalities, as noted by Cone (2011), whose work in Black Liberation Theology critically examines how the faith tradition has been weaponized to sustain



social and racial hierarchies. Applying CRT, this study explores how Pauline theology in Romans 10:12 can serve as a scriptural critique of racial superiority by negating racial distinctions within the Christian identity framework.

Postcolonial Theology

Postcolonial theology critiques the ways in which religious doctrines were historically used to justify colonialism and racial domination (Tinker, 1993). This study employs postcolonial perspectives to analyze how Romans 10:12 challenges not only ancient Jewish-Gentile hierarchies but also the colonial ideologies that have used scriptural texts to support racial supremacy and discrimination (Kidd, 2006). By reinterpreting scripture through a postcolonial lens, this framework argues that Romans 10:12 advocates for an inclusive faith community that transcends cultural and ethnic boundaries, aligning with contemporary calls to decolonize theology and dismantle hierarchical structures within Christian institutions (Jennings, 2010).

Biblical Hermeneutics

Biblical hermeneutics, particularly historical-critical and rhetorical analyses, are utilized to contextualize Romans 10:12 within the socio-political environment of the Roman Empire. Here, Paul's statement is seen as radical within a Greco-Roman worldview that classified individuals based on ethnicity and status (Esler, 2003). Through textual analysis, this framework examines the linguistic and theological nuances in Paul's assertion of equality in Christ, which Paul positions as a direct challenge to the ethnic exclusivity prevalent in both Jewish and Greco-Roman society (Dunn, 1988). This hermeneutic approach provides a foundation for understanding how Romans 10:12 articulates a universalistic theology that counters racial exclusivity by emphasizing divine impartiality.

Indeed, by integrating CRT, postcolonial theology, and biblical hermeneutics, this theoretical framework contends that Romans 10:12 has transformative implications for both ancient and contemporary contexts. Paul's message of ethnic non-distinction offers a theological critique of racial supremacy ideologies, promoting a faith community rooted in the universality of divine grace. This study thus aims to demonstrate how Romans 10:12 can contribute to ongoing dialogues on racial justice and inclusivity within Christian theology, challenging the legacies of racial discrimination and promoting an egalitarian ecclesial vision.

Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this paper is to critically evaluate the ideologies of racial supremacy and discrimination through the theological lens of Rom 10:12, exploring how the Apostle Paul's assertion of ethnic equality provides a foundational framework for addressing racial divisions in both historical and contemporary Christian contexts (Wright, 2015; Dunn, 2009). This study seeks to demonstrate that Romans 10:12 offers not only theological insights but also practical applications for challenging racial hierarchies and promoting inclusivity within Christian doctrine and practice. Meanwhile, the objectives are:

- i. To examine the socio-historical context of Rom 10:12 and its impact on Jewish-Gentile relations, focusing on how Paul's message of "no distinction between Jew and Greek" challenged existing ethnic hierarchies in the first-century Roman Empire.
- ii. To explore the interpretation of Romans 10:12 in Christian theology as a critique of racial supremacy, focusing on how Paul's message of equality has been applied in both its



- original context and modern applications, particularly in challenging ideologies that perpetuate racial discrimination.
- iii. This study examines the historical misuse of Christian scripture to justify racial discrimination and supremacy, highlighting the theological significance of Romans 10:12 as a counter-narrative against ideologies such as colonialism and slavery.
 - iv. The study aims to reinterpret Romans 10:12 using Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Postcolonial Theology, aiming to inform Christian responses to racial inequality and encourage inclusive practices rooted in theological inclusivity, thereby promoting a more inclusive society.
 - v. To propose a framework for addressing racial supremacy within Christian communities today based on the teachings of Romans 10:12. This is to offer practical recommendations for Christian communities seeking to address and dismantle racial hierarchies, emphasizing how Paul's theology of equality calls for active efforts towards reconciliation and justice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the theological implications of Romans 10:12 in confronting and dismantling ideologies of racial supremacy and discrimination within both historical and modern Christian contexts. By situating Paul's declaration of ethnic equality in its first-century socio-political setting and analyzing its relevance today, the study aims to demonstrate that Romans 10:12 serves as a foundational text advocating for inclusivity and racial justice in Christian theology. Furthermore, the study seeks to offer a re-interpretation of the verse through the lenses of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Postcolonial Theology to develop actionable insights for addressing racial divisions within Christian communities, nurturing unity, and promoting an anti-racist faith that aligns with Paul's vision of spiritual and social equality (Wright, 2015; Jennings, 2010). Thus, by examining both the historical misuse of scripture to justify racial hierarchies and the transformative potential of Romans 10:12, this study aims to offer a theological framework that supports active reconciliation, justice, and inclusivity within contemporary Christian practice (Cone, 2011; Dunn, 2009).

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach to examine Romans 10:12 as a theological framework for critiquing racial supremacy. The methodology combines historical-critical exegesis, rhetorical analysis, social-scientific criticism, and contemporary hermeneutical approaches informed by Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Postcolonial Theology. This multi-method approach provides an in-depth understanding of the original context of Romans 10:12 and its implications for contemporary issues of racial discrimination within Christian communities. Historical-critical exegesis explores the socio-political and cultural background of the first-century Roman Empire, examining how Paul's message of "no distinction between Jew and Greek" would have challenged established ethnic hierarchies. Thematic analysis is used to identify and trace key concepts related to racial and ethnic equality, connecting Pauline theology with broader biblical themes of justice and inclusion.

Social-scientific criticism examines the societal and cultural forces influencing racial dynamics in both ancient and modern contexts. Insights from social identity theory and CRT are incorporated to understand how concepts of racial identity and hierarchy persist within institutional settings, addressing the application of Romans 10:12 in contemporary Christian communities. Contemporary hermeneutics through CRT and Postcolonial Theology reinterpret



Romans 10:12 as a call for active resistance against racial discrimination. CRT provides tools for critiquing systemic racial structures, while Postcolonial Theology addresses the historical misuse of scripture to justify oppression and colonialism. This qualitative methodology connects ancient theological insights with current sociocultural challenges, providing a grounded and theologically sound basis for confronting racial supremacy within Christianity.

Understanding the Dynamics of Racial Supremacy

Meaning, Roots, and Psychological Mechanisms of Racial Supremacy

Racial supremacy refers to the ideology that one race is inherently superior to others and should therefore dominate or have privileged status over other races. This concept has had significant social, political, and economic ramifications throughout history. The dynamics of racial supremacy are many-sided, involving historical roots, socio-political structures, and psychological mechanisms that perpetuate these beliefs. Understanding these dynamics requires analyzing historical narratives, the role of institutions, and contemporary manifestations of racial supremacy. The roots of racial supremacy are deeply embedded in colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade, where European powers justified their domination and exploitation of non-European populations through claims of racial superiority (Quijano, 2000; Kanu 2018). European colonizers utilized pseudo-scientific theories of race to classify people into hierarchies, with Caucasians positioned at the top. These classifications served as a means to rationalize the subjugation of African, Indigenous, and Asian populations, thus creating a racial order that persisted even after the formal end of colonialism (Mills, 1997). During the 19th and early 20th centuries, theories such as Social Darwinism further legitimized the ideology of racial supremacy by misapplying Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection to human societies (Hawkins, 1997). These theories asserted that racial differences were not only biological but also determined intelligence, morality, and civilization levels. As a result, colonial powers continued to exploit these narratives to justify segregation, apartheid, and systemic racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010).

Racial supremacy is sustained through various socio-political structures, including legal systems, economic policies, and educational institutions. Critical Race Theory (CRT) has been instrumental in exposing how legal systems perpetuate racial hierarchies by favouring the interests of dominant racial groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). For example, during the Jim Crow era in the United States, laws enforced racial segregation, creating barriers to economic and social mobility for African Americans. Even after the Civil Rights Movement, systemic racism persists through practices such as redlining, mass incarceration, and voter suppression, which disproportionately affect racial minorities (Alexander, 2012; Kanu 2013). Similarly, economic policies have historically favoured white populations, contributing to the racial wealth gap. For instance, the New Deal programs of the 1930s, while transformative for many white Americans, systematically excluded African Americans from certain benefits like Social Security and access to federally subsidized housing (Katznelson, 2005). These policies reinforced economic disparities and created enduring socio-economic inequalities between racial groups.

The psychological aspects of racial supremacy are significant. Social Identity Theory suggests that individuals derive part of their identity from their membership in social groups, including racial groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This need for a positive social identity can lead to in-group favouritism and out-group derogation, particularly in societies where racial hierarchies are entrenched (Kanu, Paul and Omenukwa, 2024). The belief in the superiority of one's racial



group can nurture prejudice and discrimination against those perceived as racially inferior (Usman and Paul, 2024). Moreover, studies on implicit bias have revealed that stereotypes and prejudices often operate unconsciously, even among those who claim to reject racist ideologies (Greenwald & Krieger, 2006). These implicit biases contribute to the persistence of racial supremacy in everyday interactions, as they can influence decisions in hiring, law enforcement, and education, leading to disparate outcomes for racial minorities.

Contemporary Manifestations of Racial Supremacy

In contemporary society, racial supremacy manifests in both overt and covert forms. While explicit white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi movements have garnered attention, more subtle forms of racial supremacy are pervasive in mainstream discourse and policies. Bonilla-Silva (2010) introduces the concept of “colorblind racism,” where individuals claim to ignore race while simultaneously upholding systemic inequalities through policies that fail to address the structural disadvantages faced by racial minorities. This ideology allows racial supremacy to adapt to changing social norms while maintaining its core belief in the inherent superiority of certain racial groups, sometimes symbolically, given the power of symbolic representations (Kanu & Pilani, 2024a). The rise of nationalism and anti-immigrant rhetoric in many Western nations has also been linked to underlying ideologies of racial supremacy. Scholars have observed that such movements often frame immigration as a threat to the cultural and racial purity of the nation-state, echoing historical themes of racial superiority and exclusion (Wodak, 2015). These narratives reinforce racial hierarchies by positioning immigrants and non-white populations as outsiders who undermine national identity and social cohesion.

In sum, the dynamics of racial supremacy are complex, involving historical justifications, institutional reinforcement, and psychological mechanisms. From its roots in colonialism and slavery to its modern expressions in systemic racism and nationalist rhetoric, racial supremacy continues to shape societies and influence global power structures. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing strategies to combat racial inequality and foster more inclusive societies. By addressing both the structural and psychological aspects of racial supremacy, scholars and activists can work towards dismantling these ideologies and promoting equity across racial lines.

Racial supremacy in Christian history

The relationship between Christianity and racial supremacy is complex and often contentious. Historically, Christian teachings have been interpreted in ways that both challenge and reinforce ideas of racial hierarchy. While the core message of Christianity promotes love and equality among all people (Galatians 3:28), certain interpretations and institutions within Christianity have been complicit in supporting racial supremacy. This discussion examines the dynamics of racial supremacy in Christian history, focusing on the role of theological interpretations, the colonial and missionary activities of European Christians, and the ways in which Christianity has both reinforced and challenged racial hierarchies. One of the critical ways that Christianity has intersected with racial supremacy is through theological interpretations that justify the subordination of particular racial groups. The “Curse of Ham” narrative, derived from Genesis 9:20-27, is one of the most significant biblical interpretations used to legitimize racial hierarchy. In this story, Noah curses Ham’s son, Canaan, which later Christian interpreters linked to Africans, suggesting that black people were divinely ordained to serve others (Haynes, 2002). This interpretation became especially prominent during the



transatlantic slave trade, as European and American Christians used it to justify the enslavement of Africans, and perhaps neo-colonialism as the case may be (Kanu & Pilani, 2024b).

Such theological rationalizations were not limited to the biblical text but extended to a broader Christian cosmology that saw Europeans as spiritually and intellectually superior. Kidd (2006) notes that during the colonial era, Christian missionaries often viewed Indigenous peoples as “heathens” whose spiritual and cultural practices were inferior to European Christian norms. This ideology was instrumental in justifying the colonial project, as it framed the conversion and “civilizing” of non-European peoples as part of a divine mandate. The role of Christianity in colonialism is a critical aspect of how racial supremacy was propagated through Christian history. The European colonial powers, particularly Spain, Portugal, and later Britain, used Christianity as a tool to legitimize their expansion into Africa, the Americas, and Asia. Christian missions were often established alongside colonial administrations, working hand-in-hand to convert Indigenous populations while simultaneously promoting European cultural norms (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991).

For instance, the Doctrine of Discovery, sanctioned by papal bulls such as *Inter Caetera* in 1493, provided theological support for European conquest by granting Christian rulers the right to claim territories inhabited by non-Christians (Miller et al., 2010). This doctrine reinforced racial hierarchies by framing non-European lands as rightfully belonging to Christian (and thus, European) sovereigns. Such theological constructs positioned Indigenous peoples as racially and spiritually inferior, making their subjugation appear as a natural extension of Christian expansion. Moreover, in the United States, Christian doctrine was used to justify the displacement and assimilation of Native American populations. Mission schools, often run by Christian denominations, sought to “civilize” Native children by eradicating their languages and cultures, promoting the idea that their indigenous identities were inferior to Christian European norms (Adams, 1995). This process of cultural erasure was fundamentally tied to ideas of racial supremacy, as it sought to replace Indigenous identities with those deemed more aligned with Christian values.

The transatlantic slave trade is another significant context in which Christianity intersected with racial supremacy. European and American Christians used biblical justifications to defend the institution of slavery, particularly in the American South. Pro-slavery theologians argued that the Bible condoned slavery, citing passages like Ephesians 6:5 (“Slaves, obey your earthly masters”) to support their stance (Raboteau, 2004). The belief that Africans were inherently suited for servitude was not only a racial belief but one that was often framed in terms of Christian doctrine, suggesting that enslaved Africans could find spiritual salvation through their subordination. However, Christianity also provided a framework for resistance among enslaved Africans. The adaptation of Christianity by enslaved people in the Americas often focused on themes of liberation and divine justice, drawing from the Exodus narrative where God frees the Israelites from bondage (Raboteau, 2004). This reinterpretation of Christian scripture became a cornerstone of African American spiritual resistance, challenging the theological basis of racial supremacy and later influencing movements such as abolitionism and the Civil Rights Movement.

Contemporary Legacies and Challenges to Racial Supremacy within Christianity

The legacy of racial supremacy within Christianity continues to shape the relationship between race and religion today, a phenomenon typical among religions globally (Richard, Paul &



Azuwike, 2024). Contemporary scholars and theologians, particularly within liberation theology, have sought to address the historical complicity of Christian institutions in racial oppression. James Cone, a key figure in Black Liberation Theology, argues that Christianity in America has historically served to maintain white supremacy by aligning with the social and political power structures that marginalized Black communities (Cone, 2011). Cone emphasizes the need for a reinterpretation of Christian theology that centers on the experience of the oppressed, challenging the historical narrative that Christianity inherently supports racial hierarchy. Additionally, postcolonial theologians have critiqued the way Christian missions contributed to the cultural and spiritual domination of Indigenous peoples. Scholars like Tinker (1993) argue for a decolonization of Christian theology that acknowledges and rectifies the historical harm done to Indigenous communities. Such work emphasizes the importance of reclaiming Indigenous spiritualities and traditions while also seeking ways to reconcile Christian faith with the affirmation of cultural diversity. Indeed, the relationship between Christianity and racial supremacy is marked by a tension between doctrines that have been used to justify racial inequality and those that have served as a basis for resistance against it. From the use of biblical interpretations to support slavery and colonialism to contemporary efforts to decolonize theology, Christianity has played a significant role in shaping racial ideologies. Understanding this history is crucial for addressing the ongoing challenges of racism within Christian institutions and encouraging a more inclusive and equitable interpretation of Christian teachings.

Exegesis of Romans 10:12

The Historical Context and Socio-political Climate of the 1st Century Roman Empire

Born Saul in Tarsus, a prominent city in Cilicia, Paul was raised in a diaspora Jewish family, receiving a thorough education in Jewish law and tradition (Philippians 3:5-6). Simultaneously, as evidenced by his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:25-29), Paul was integrated into the broader Greco-Roman world (Dunn, 2009). Paul's background as a Pharisee (Acts 23:6) initially placed him in opposition to the nascent Christian movement. However, his dramatic conversion experience (Acts 9:1-19) led to a radical reorientation of his theological perspective. This transformation is crucial for understanding his approach to ethnicity and universalism in his epistles, particularly in Romans (Sanders, 1977). Paul's unique position as a bridge between Jewish and Gentile cultures provided him with a nuanced understanding of the tensions and dynamics between these groups. His missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean world further exposed him to diverse cultural contexts, informing his universalist theology (Horrell, 2000).

Meanwhile, the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in the 1st century Roman Empire was characterized by complex interactions and tensions. Jewish communities, while granted certain privileges by Roman authorities, often faced marginalization and periodic persecution (Goodman, 2007). In Rome itself, the Jewish population had experienced significant upheaval. The expulsion of Jews from Rome under Claudius in 49 CE (Suetonius, Claud. 25.4) had disrupted the Jewish-Christian community, likely influencing the composition of the Roman church to which Paul was writing (Lampe, 2003). The return of Jewish Christians to Rome following Claudius's death in 54 CE created a context of potential conflict between Jewish and Gentile believers, a situation Paul addresses in Romans (Jewett, 2007). The broader Greco-Roman world often viewed Jewish religious practices with a mixture of fascination and disdain. Jewish monotheism and refusal to participate in imperial cult practices sometimes led to



accusations of atheism and misanthropy (Schäfer, 1997). These tensions form an essential backdrop to Paul's arguments for unity in Christ.

Roman Views on Ethnicity and Social Hierarchy

The Roman Empire of the 1st century AD was characterized by a complex system of social stratification based on various factors, including ethnicity, citizenship status, and socioeconomic class. While the empire was multiethnic, it was not egalitarian in its treatment of different ethnic groups (Woolf, 1998). Roman citizenship, which Paul possessed, conferred significant legal and social privileges. However, even among citizens, there existed a hierarchy based on social class and ethnic origin. The Roman elite often viewed themselves as culturally superior to conquered peoples, including Greeks and Jews (Isaac, 2004). The concept of “*Romanitas*” or “Roman-ness” was not strictly tied to ethnicity but rather to the adoption of Roman cultural norms and values. This allowed for a degree of social mobility and integration for some non-Romans, particularly elites from conquered territories (Wallace-Hadrill, 2008).

However, this system also reinforced existing power structures and ethnic hierarchies. The Roman worldview often categorized people into “civilized” (primarily Romans and Greeks) and “barbarians” (everyone else), with Jews occupying an ambiguous position in this schema (Johnson, 2012). In this context, Paul's statement in Romans 10:12 about there being “no distinction between Jew and Greek” represents a radical challenge to prevailing social norms. It suggests a new community transcending traditional ethnic and social boundaries, united by faith in Christ rather than by cultural or ethnic identity (Esler, 2003; Onukwuba et al.). This historical backdrop provides crucial context for understanding the revolutionary nature of Paul's universalist claims in Romans. His vision of a community where ethnic distinctions are superseded by unity in Christ directly confronts the ethnic and social hierarchies deeply ingrained in 1st century Roman society.

Literary Context

The Letter to the Romans is widely recognized as Paul's *magnum opus*, presenting a comprehensive exposition of his theology. Scholars generally agree on the letter's overall structure, though nuances in interpretation exist (Moo, 1996). The epistle can be broadly divided into four main sections:

- a. Introduction (1:1-17)
- b. Doctrinal Exposition (1:18-11:36)
- c. Ethical Exhortation (12:1-15:13)
- d. Conclusion and Personal Remarks (15:14-16:27)

The present verse of interest, Rom 10:12, falls within the doctrinal exposition, specifically in the section addressing the relationship between Israel and the gospel (chapters 9-11). This placement is crucial for understanding its significance in Paul's overall argument (Dunn, 1988). The structure of Romans reflects a careful rhetorical strategy, with Paul building his case for the gospel's universality and its implications for Jewish-Gentile relations in the church. The placement of our focus verse within this structure underscores its importance in Paul's theological framework (Jewett, 2007). Romans 9-11 forms a distinct unit within the letter, addressing the complex issue of Israel's place in God's salvific plan given the gospel's apparent failure among many Jews. This section is crucial for understanding Paul's view on ethnicity and divine election (Wright, 2015). Chapter 9 begins with Paul's expression of anguish over



Israel's unbelief, followed by a discussion of God's sovereign choice. Chapter 10, where v. 12 is located, focuses on Israel's present situation and the availability of salvation to all who believe. Chapter 11 concludes with a discussion of Israel's future and God's ultimate plan for both Jews and Gentiles. Rom 10:12 is situated within Paul's argument about the universality of salvation. It anticipates his assertion that "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (10:13) and his questions about the necessity of preaching for belief (10:14-15). This immediate context emphasizes the verse's role in Paul's universalist soteriology (Cranfield, 1979).

Textual Analysis

The transliterated Greek text of Romans 10:12, according to the critical editions (NA28/UBS5), reads as follows:

ou gar estin diastolē Ioudaiou te kai Hellēnos, ho gar autos kyrios pantōn, ploutōn eis pantas tous epikaloumenous auton

English Translation

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. (Rom. 10:12 RSV)

Key Terms and Their Semantic Range

Diastolē (Distinction)

The term *diastolē* is crucial to understanding Paul's argument. In classical Greek, it primarily meant "expansion" or "dilation," often used in medical contexts. However, in *Koine* Greek, it developed the meaning of "distinction" or "difference" (Liddell, Scott, Jones, 1996). In the Septuagint, the term is used to translate Hebrew terms related to separation or distinction, often in ritual or legal contexts (e.g., Leviticus 10:10). Paul's use here likely draws on this Jewish background while applying it to ethnic categories (Dunn, 1988). In the New Testament, this is the only occurrence of *diastolē* in Romans, though Paul uses it twice in 1 Corinthians (7:34, 14:7) with a similar sense of "difference." The rarity of the term in Paul's writings highlights its significance in this context (Silva, 2014).

Kyrios (Lord)

Kyrios is a term rich in theological significance. In Greco-Roman usage, it could denote an owner, master, or person of high status. In the Septuagint, it frequently translates the divine name YHWH, investing it with profound theological meaning for Greek-speaking Jews (Fitzmyer, 1993). In Paul's usage, *kyrios* is often applied to Jesus, identifying him with the God of Israel. Here, the phrase "the same Lord of all" (*ho gar autos kyrios pantōn*) emphasizes the universal sovereignty of God/Christ, challenging ethnic particularism (Hurtado, 2003).

Ploutōn (Rich)

Ploutōn is a present active participle from the verb *pluteo*, meaning "to be rich" or "to abound in." In the Greco-Roman world, wealth was often associated with divine favour and social status (Malina, 2001). Paul's use of this term in relation to God's generosity towards "all who call on him" subverts conventional notions of divine favouritism. It suggests an abundance of



divine resources available without ethnic distinction, challenging ideas of racial or ethnic privilege in accessing divine blessings (Jewett, 2007).

Grammatical and Syntactical Clarifications

The verse begins with a strong negation *ou gar* (for there is not), employed to emphatically deny any distinction. The use of *te kai* (both...and) in *Ioudaïou te kai Hellēnos* (of Jew and of Greek) emphasizes the comprehensive nature of this non-distinction, encompassing the two major ethnic categories in Paul's worldview (Wallace, 1996). The second clause, introduced by *gar*, "for," provides the theological rationale for this lack of distinction. The emphatic *autos* "same," stresses the singularity of the Lord over all groups. The final participial phrase *ploutōn eis pantas tous epikaloumenous auton* (being rich to all who call upon him) further elaborates on the Lord's impartiality. The present tense of *ploutōn* suggests ongoing action, while *eis pantas*, "to all," reinforces the universal scope of divine generosity (Porter, 1992). This grammatical structure underscores Paul's argument for ethnic equality before God, systematically dismantling any basis for racial or ethnic supremacy within the believing community. In conclusion, this textual analysis reveals Paul's careful choice of terms and syntactical structure to emphasize the nullification of ethnic distinctions in light of God's universal lordship and generosity. This linguistic precision provides a solid foundation for interpreting Romans 10:12 as a powerful statement against racial supremacy in early Christian thought.

Exegetical Analysis

Paul's argument for universalism in Romans 10:12 represents a crucial moment in his exposition of the gospel's universality. This universalism is not merely an abstract theological concept, but a concrete challenge to the ethnic particularism prevalent in both Jewish and Greco-Roman thought of the time (Sanders, 1983). Paul's argument unfolds in several steps, beginning with the establishment of the universal problem of sin (Rom 3:23). He then argues for justification by faith apart from works of the law (Rom 3:28) and redefines the people of God based on faith rather than ethnicity (Rom 4). This line of reasoning culminates in Romans 10:12, where Paul asserts the equality of all before God. This progression demonstrates that Paul's universalism is deeply rooted in his understanding of the gospel's nature and implications. By negating ethnic distinction in salvation, Paul effectively undermines any basis for racial or ethnic supremacy within the Christian community (Dunn, 1988).

Paul's declaration of God as "Lord of all" (*kyrios pantōn*) engages with and transforms both Jewish and Greco-Roman concepts of divine sovereignty. In Jewish thought, the idea of God as universal Lord was present (e.g., Psalm 24:1), but often in tension with Israel's special status as God's chosen people. Paul radically reinterprets this concept, maintaining God's universal lordship while extending its implications to include Gentiles on equal footing with Jews (Wright, 2013). In Greco-Roman thought, the concept of a universal deity was not unknown, particularly in Stoic philosophy. However, Paul's monotheistic claim and its ethical implications would have been distinctive and challenging (Ferguson, 2003). By asserting that this universal Lord is "rich to all who call on him," Paul subverts both Jewish notions of exclusive covenant privileges and Greco-Roman ideas of divine favouritism based on ethnicity or cultic practices (Barclay, 2015). The divine impartiality expressed in Romans 10:12 has profound implications. Soteriologically, it means that salvation is equally accessible to all, regardless of ethnic background. Ecclesiologically, it suggests that the church should reflect this divine impartiality in its structure and practices. Ethically, believers are called to emulate



divine impartiality in their treatment of others. Missiologically, the gospel's universal scope necessitates a mission to all peoples. This impartiality challenges any form of racial or ethnic supremacy, as it posits a fundamental equality before God that supersedes cultural, ethnic, or racial distinctions (Bassler, 1982).

Romans 10:12 is integrally connected to Paul's central thesis of justification by faith. It reinforces the idea that justification is not based on ethnic identity or law-keeping, but on faith in Christ. It extends the implications of justification by faith to the realm of ethnic relations within the church and underscores the sufficiency of faith as the sole criterion for inclusion in God's people, negating claims of ethnic privilege. Paul's argument here serves as a practical application of his doctrine of justification by faith, demonstrating that this theological concept has concrete implications for communal life and inter-ethnic relations (Beker, 1980). Furthermore, by linking divine impartiality with the act of "calling upon" the Lord (*epikaloumenous*), Paul emphasizes the responsive nature of faith. This faith-response, rather than ethnic identity, becomes the defining characteristic of God's people (Hays, 1989; Kanu & Ezenweke 2010).

By and large, the exegetical analysis of Romans 10:12 reveals a carefully constructed argument against ethnic or racial supremacy within the Christian community. Paul's assertion of divine impartiality, grounded in the lordship of Christ and the doctrine of justification by faith, presents a radical challenge to ethnic prejudices and a foundation for a new, inclusive community transcending racial and ethnic boundaries. This demonstrates that Paul's theology, far from being abstract, has profound implications for social relations and community formation. It provides a powerful biblical basis for critiquing and dismantling notions of racial supremacy, both in the ancient context and in contemporary applications of the text.

Theological Implications

Paul's assertion of equality in Christ, as expressed in Romans 10:12, presents a profound theological concept that stands in stark contrast to the social realities of the first-century Roman Empire. This tension between the proclaimed spiritual equality and the existing societal hierarchies has several important theological implications. Horrell (2000) suggests that Paul's statement can be understood as proclaiming an eschatological reality breaking into the present, challenging existing social structures. This interpretation frames the equality in Christ as a future state that is already beginning to manifest, creating a tension with the current order. Barclay (2011) argues that this equality in Christ implies a radical transformation of identity, where allegiance to Christ supersedes ethnic and social categories. This perspective emphasizes the profound shift in self-understanding that Paul's theology demands from believers. However, as Meeks (1983) points out, this theological equality posed practical challenges for early Christian communities attempting to live out this ideal within existing social hierarchies.

Romans 10:12 also presents a significant challenge to ethnocentric interpretations of salvation prevalent in both Jewish and Greco-Roman thought. Donaldson (2006) observes that Paul reinterprets the concept of divine election, extending it beyond ethnic Israel to include Gentiles. This radical reinterpretation of election theology challenges long-held assumptions about the exclusivity of God's favour. Wright (2013) characterizes Paul's argument as universalizing Jewish particularism without negating the historical significance of Israel in God's plan. This nuanced approach allows Paul to maintain continuity with Jewish tradition while radically expanding its scope. Esler (2003) notes that the verse implicitly critiques any notion of ethnic privilege in relation to divine favour or salvation. This critique extends beyond Jewish



ethnocentrism to challenge any form of ethnic or cultural superiority in matters of faith and salvation. The assertion of God's universal lordship and impartial richness towards all carries far-reaching implications. Schnabel (2008) argues that it provides a theological foundation for the Christian mission to all nations, underpinning the early church's expansion beyond its Jewish roots. Banks (1994) emphasizes that it calls for a unified church that transcends ethnic and cultural boundaries, challenging believers to form communities that reflect this spiritual reality.

Lastly, Hays (1996) points out that this theological principle implies ethical responsibilities for believers to treat all people with equal dignity and respect, emanating from their original purpose at creation with equal mandate to protect and secure creation regardless of race (Pilani, 2024). The equality proclaimed in Christ is not merely a spiritual abstraction but a principle that should manifest in concrete actions and attitudes towards others (Kanu, et al., 2024; Kanu 2012; Kanu & Haaga 2012). In conclusion, Romans 10:12 encapsulates a radical theological vision that challenged the social norms of its time and continues to have profound implications for Christian theology, ecclesiology, and ethics. Its assertion of equality in Christ provides a basis for critiquing ethnocentrism, redefining divine election, and promoting a universal understanding of God's grace that transcends cultural and ethnic boundaries.

Critique of Contemporary Racial Supremacy Ideologies in the light of Rom 10:12

Romans 10:12 is a scriptural text that provides a comprehensive framework for addressing racial supremacy ideologies and their implications for modern Christianity, because the theological foundation established in Romans 10:12 presents a decisive critique of racial supremacy ideologies. Jennings (2010) argues that the text fundamentally refutes any theological justification for racial superiority by establishing the universal equality of all people before God. This theological stance is further strengthened by Carter's (2008) analysis, which emphasizes how the verse challenges race-based identities by establishing a primary identity in Christ that transcends ethnic categories. Cone (2011) extends this understanding to the socio-political realm, suggesting that the verse necessitates a thorough re-examination of social and political structures that perpetuate racial hierarchies. In terms of modern Christian ecclesiology and missiology, the implications are far-reaching. DeYoung et al. (2003) demonstrate how the verse supports the development of multicultural churches that authentically reflect the diversity inherent in the body of Christ. This ecclesiological perspective is complemented by Bosch's (1991) missiological insights, which advocate for mission strategies that honour cultural diversity while maintaining the universal scope of the gospel message. Volf (1996) builds on these concepts by showing how the verse provides a theological foundation for ecumenical efforts seeking unity across ethnic and denominational boundaries.

The text also directly confronts contemporary racial divisions within Christianity. Emerson and Smith (2000) use this passage to question the theological legitimacy of racially segregated worship practices that persist in many contexts. Moreover, the verse calls for proactive efforts toward racial reconciliation within Christian communities, not merely passive acceptance. Rah (2009) takes this further by arguing that the text implies the necessity of structural reforms within church organizations to authentically reflect and implement ethnic equality. This comprehensive understanding of Romans 10:12 challenges contemporary Christians to move beyond superficial interpretations and engage with its profound implications for addressing racial supremacy and nurturing genuine unity in the body of Christ.



Conclusion

The analysis of Romans 10:12 in this study offers a profound theological critique of racial supremacy, demonstrating the enduring relevance of Paul's teachings for contemporary social and religious contexts. The paper has highlighted the radical nature of Paul's declaration that there is "no distinction between Jew and Greek" (Romans 10:12). Situated within the socio-political tensions of the 1st-century Roman Empire, Paul's vision challenges the entrenched ethnic hierarchies of his time, advocating for a community defined by faith rather than by cultural or racial divisions. This study further underscores how Paul's message of universal equality has implications beyond its ancient context, providing a robust framework for confronting modern ideologies of racial supremacy. The misuse of Christian scripture to justify racial hierarchies throughout history, especially during the eras of colonialism and slavery, reveals the need for a reinterpretation of biblical texts that emphasize equality and inclusivity. Romans 10:12 offers a theological foundation for this reexamination, asserting that the same divine grace is extended to all, irrespective of ethnic background.

Additionally, through a multidisciplinary approach, this paper has shown that the teachings of Paul can play a vital role in reshaping contemporary Christian thought and practice, encouraging communities to reject racial hierarchies and encourage as well as promote inclusivity. This vision calls for a reimagining of the church as a space where all people, regardless of race or culture, are seen as equally valuable before God. Moreover, the intersection of critical race theory, postcolonial theology, and biblical hermeneutics within this study emphasizes the importance of engaging both ancient texts and contemporary social issues in pursuit of justice. Ultimately, Romans 10:12 stands as a compelling reminder that Christian theology, when properly understood, offers powerful resources for challenging racial injustice and nurturing a more equitable and inclusive society. By affirming the equal worth of all individuals before God, Paul's message invites a continuous struggle against the remnants of racial supremacy, urging believers to embody the inclusive love and unity that the gospel proclaims. As the church confronts its historical complicity in racial oppression, it can also draw from its scriptural heritage to actively contribute to the dismantling of racial hierarchies and the creation of a more just world.

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