

Overcoming Sin (Part 10)

Prejudice

Galatians 3:26-29

I. Introduction: 1, 2

1. 3 The word “prejudice” is defined as:

- A. ** A judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known; preconceived idea, favorable or, more usually, unfavorable.
- B. ** A judgment or opinion held in disregard of facts that contradict it.
- C. ** Suspicion, intolerance, or irrational hatred of other races, creeds, religions, occupations, etc. (Guralnik).

2. 4 So a prejudiced person is one who has their mind made up without knowing all the facts and often without caring to know all the facts.

- A. Prejudice is an exercise in willful ignorance and conceit resulting in wickedness, hatred, injustice, violence, and sometimes even death.
- B. It is a violation of what our Lord offered as:
 - (1) The second greatest commandment (**Matt. 22:39**: “And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”) and,
 - (2) What many people call the “Golden Rule” (**Matt. 7:12**: “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”).
- C. Such a thing should not be a part of a Christian’s character, but sadly for some it is (prejudice by some against the Lord’s work in the Philippines).

II. Discussion:

1. 5 Biblical Examples of Prejudice: Prejudice is prevalent in this nation (e.g., white v. black, black v. white, v. immigrants, south v. north, north v. south, gender, body type, hair color, etc.). However, prejudice is not a new thing. It has plagued mankind throughout history.**

- ☛ *The Egyptians were prejudice against the Hebrews (**Gen. 43:32**: “So they set him a place by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves; because the Egyptians could not eat food with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.”).*
- ☛ *The Jews and Samaritans were prejudiced against each other (**Jn. 4:9**: “Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, ‘How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?’ For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.”). The Samaritan race was the result of Jews intermarrying with Gentiles. The Jews despised the Samaritans as “half-breeds,” and the Samaritans returned this hatred and violence back upon the Jews.*
- ☛ *The Jews against the Gentiles (**Acts 10:28**: “Then he said to them, ‘You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.’”). The Jews viewed all Gentiles, regardless of their individual character, as unclean and unfit for association.*
- ☛ *The Pharisees against the publicans (Lk. 18:9-14). The publicans were Jews who collected taxes for the Romans. The Jews viewed them as traitors (because they collected taxes for the Romans) and thieves (because they commonly charged more for taxes and kept the surplus). Because of this, all publicans were viewed as sinners, regardless of their individual character or business practices.*
- ☛ *Nazareth (Jn. 1:43-46). Nathanael scorned the idea the Messiah could come from a town like Nazareth, asking, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Apparently the Jews held the town of*

Nazareth in such low esteem, Nathanael had already judged that nothing good could ever come out of that town.

2. **6 The Results of Prejudice:** The evil of prejudice can be seen by the evil fruit it produces.

A. **** It closes a man's eyes to the truth:**

- (1) Prejudice against Jesus closed people's eyes and ears to the truth (**Matt. 13:14-15**). Since Jesus had not been trained in their schools and did not keep their man-made customs, they determined He could not possibly be the Messiah.
- (2) Many people today are trapped in religious error for the very same reason.
 - (a) They don't want to change their minds, beliefs, or practices—regardless of Bible truth (peer pressure, parents, etc.). This prejudice is very strong in the U.S., but less so in the Philippines (i.e., they convert many in denominations, even preachers and pastors!).
 - (b) Sometimes Christians exhibit prejudice against preachers, papers, or local churches based upon judgments they have made without weighing all the facts (e.g., against Ron Halbrook).
- (3) The battle for lost souls is fought in the minds of men (**2 Cor. 10:4-5**: *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, 5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,"*). The gospel cannot enter a closed mind, and prejudice closes minds (**James 1:21**: *"...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."*; Campbellites).

B. **7 It breeds dishonesty:**

- (1) Someone said, "An honest man in error, when he learns the truth, will either cease to be in error or cease to be honest."
- (2) Some people resort to dishonesty to perpetuate their prejudice.
 - (a) The Jews understood Jesus claimed He would rise from the dead in three days (**Matt. 27:63**).
 - (b) Jesus did rise from the dead, but instead of repenting and accepting Him as the Messiah, the Jews gave the guards money and told them to lie and claim the disciples had come and stolen the body (**Matt. 28:11-15**).
- (3) The Jews were so blinded by their prejudice against Jesus that they were not going to let the factual evidence stop them from destroying Him.

C. **8 It leads to hypocrisy:** The New Testament reveals many Jewish Christians had a hard time accepting the Gentiles into the church.

- (1) Even Peter, whom the Lord used to open the door of the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10 & 11), later fell victim to this prejudice.
- (2) In Antioch, while away from his Jewish brethren, Peter treated his Gentile brethren as acceptable, but when some of the Jewish brethren came from Jerusalem, he withdrew himself from the Gentile brethren and treated them as unacceptable (**Gal. 2:11-13**).
- (3) His influence led others (e.g., Barnabas, **Gal. 2:13**: *"And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy."*) to play the hypocrite with him.

D. **9 It leads to anger:**

- (1) Remember when God called Jonah to be an instrument of mercy towards the people of Nineveh? **Jonah 1:2**: *"Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it; for their wickedness has come up before Me."*

- (a) Jonah was prejudiced against the people of Nineveh, he hated them and wanted them to be destroyed.
 - (b) He despised the very idea of helping them repent and fled in the opposite direction (**Jonah 1:3**: “*But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.*”).
 - (c) When he reluctantly went to Nineveh and preached to the people, they repented, and God spared their lives, but it angered Jonah and he wanted to die (**Jonah 4:1-3**: “*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. 2 So he prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. 3 Therefore now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live!’*”).
 - (d) Because of his prejudice, all Jonah “saw” in Nineveh were enemies, but God saw people whom He loved and wanted to spare.
- (2) Although Jonah did not personally do anything to harm the people of Nineveh, his reluctance to preach to them indicated he wanted to see them destroyed. Unfortunately, the anger aroused by prejudice often results in violence and death.
 - (3) Does prejudice affect/influence who we share the gospel with? It shouldn’t!

E. **10 It is sin:**

- (1) James wrote to Christians who were judging others by their appearance (**Jas. 2:1-9**).
- (2) They treated those who appeared to be rich in an honorable manner, while dismissing those who appeared to be poor. Do we treat some people different than others? (e.g., fawn over a rich person, a person of “stature”? FC problem)
- (3) In doing so, they dishonored the poor man, sinned against him, and brought shame upon themselves. We must exercise caution we are not guilty of similar prejudice.

3. **11 How to Overcome Prejudice:** As we have seen, prejudice is an ungodly attitude leading men to commit various kinds of sins. However, this attitude does not have to remain a part of our character. The following suggestions can help us overcome the sin of prejudice.

A. **** Remember God is not prejudiced:**

- (1) God is not a respecter of persons (**Rom. 2:11**: “*For there is no partiality with God.*”).
- (2) One’s nationality, skin color, gender, age, etc. doesn’t matter to God. Regardless of who we are, we are all in the same boat, spiritually speaking! Rom. 3:23; 6:23 Sin is the great “leveler”! I’m a sinner, therefore, what would ever lead me to think I’m better than anyone?!
- (3) God cares about an individual’s faith and obedience, not trivial things like nationality, skin color, education, social standing, etc. (**Acts 10:34-35**: “*Then Peter opened his mouth and said: ‘In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. 35 But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.’*”).
- (4) God’s desire must be our desire! **1 Tim. 2:3-4**: “*For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*”

B. **12 Remember the gospel is not prejudiced:**

- (1) The Lord commissioned the apostles to “*make disciples of all the nations*” (Matt. 28:19) by preaching the gospel to “*every creature*” (Mk. 16:15-16).
- (2) Heaven’s invitation extends to “*whosoever*” (Rev. 22:17).

- (3) Only an individual can judge himself to be unworthy of the gospel; he does so by rejecting the gospel (**Acts 13:46**: “Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.’”).

- (4) Don’t pre-judge people! Often the person you think least likely to obey the gospel will obey!

C. 13 Remember the cross is not prejudiced:

- (1) Our Lord’s death on the cross resulted in the reconciliation of two groups (Jews and Gentiles) who were prejudiced against one another, making them one (**Eph. 2:14-16**).
- (2) There are no racial, economic, social, or gender distinctions in Christ, no one has an advantage over another (**Gal. 3:26-29**).
- (3) We cannot cling to the cross and claim the salvation found there while at the same time harboring prejudice in our hearts toward others.

D. 14 Learn to love all men:

- (1) What is the second greatest commandment? **Matt. 22:37-40**: “Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”
- (2) Love works no ill toward another; it demands we give others the benefit of the doubt and allow them to prove themselves instead of stereotyping them and prejudging them.
- (a) Recall MLK’s words? “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.”
- (b) Isn’t that how you want people to judge you? Especially from a spiritual standpoint?
- (c) The “Golden Rule” will not allow us to be prejudiced against others (Matt. 7:12); it demands we treat people the way we want to be treated.
- (d) We do not want to be stereotyped and prejudged; since we want to be taken on our own merit, we must do the same for others.

E. 15 Learn to look upon the heart:

- (1) We need to learn to look upon the people the same way God does; look upon one’s heart and not on factors like race, nationality, gender, stature, physical beauty, etc. Contrast the choosing of Saul and David:
- (a) Criteria for Saul’s choosing: **1 Sam. 9:2**: “And he had a choice and handsome son whose name was Saul. There was not a more handsome person than he among the children of Israel. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people.”
- (b) Criteria for David’s choosing: **1 Sam. 16:7**: “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’”
- (2) God does not take into account all the factors we tend to use to prejudge others.
- (3) God judges a man by his character, not his skin color; to criticize the color of one’s skin is to criticize God’s handiwork.

F. 16 Get the facts before judging others:

- (1) Remember prejudice is a judgment formed before getting all of the facts or without regard for the facts (e.g., stereotyping racial groups, “all Jews are greedy, money ‘grubbers,’ “all black

people are criminals,” etc.)(**Prov. 29:20:** “Do you see a man hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.”).

- (2) Contrary to popular belief, God allows (in fact requires) us to make judgments about people.
 - (a) However, we must be very careful and honest in forming our judgments.
 - (b) The Bible also teaches that facts must be supported by eyewitness testimony (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:6).
 - (c) The Bible also teaches that we need to get all the facts and get them straight before forming our judgments (**Prov. 18:17:** “The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.”).
- (3) Our judgments must be free of prejudice! **John 7:24:** “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

G. **17 Be willing to change our minds:**

- (1) Nathanael prejudicially dismissed Jesus simply because He was born in Nazareth (**John 1:46a:** “And Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’”).
 - (a) But Philip told him to reassess the situation: “Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’” (**Jn. 1:46b**)
 - (b) Why? Because the only way Nathanael was going to change his views about Jesus was for him to see for himself; to get the facts for himself.
 - (c) When he did, he changed his mind about the Lord (**John 1:47-49:** “Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!’ 48 Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ 49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’”).
- (2) Prejudice is a sin that can be caused by willful ignorance; we overcome it by taking the time to get the facts and then responding to those facts in an honest fashion.

III. **Conclusion: 18**

1. Prejudice is a sin contrary to the nature of God, the universal appeal of the gospel, the work of the cross, and the demands of love.
2. It has no place in the heart and life of a Christian (Jn. 7:24).
 - A. We can use whatever excuse we want to try to justify our own prejudices, but in our heart we know they are wrong and sinful.
 - B. Instead, we must do what we can to overcome this sin, and pray to God for help in removing it from our lives.
3. Remember: overcoming this, and any, sin requires conscious effort!

Adapted from *Overcoming Sin*, by Heath Rogers, 2013, One Stone Press, Bowling Green, KY (pp. 83-86).

References:

Guralnik, David B. *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language*. New York, NY; 1986.