



“Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons” (Acts 10:34).

Race Relations

Central Truth: Christians must love every person Christ loves.

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Topic: Prejudice; Race Relations.

A little child was playing in the community swimming pool with other children, as his mother stood watch nearby. Suddenly one of the children dashed water into the face of the child. Others took up the “fun” and did the same. Soon the play turned into abuse. The mother had come to the rescue of her child, taking him out of the water. As they walked away the weeping child asked, “Why won’t they let me play in the water, too?” The mother’s reply was, “It is because you are of a different color. You see, you are white!”

That incident actually occurred to a family serving the Lord on a foreign mission field. It demonstrates that racial prejudice flows in all directions.

But there is no prejudice with God. To say “*God is no respecter of persons*” (Acts 10:34) means He receives no one on the basis of race, sex, culture, or other social barriers. People have a problem with prejudice, but God does not. If He had, we Gentiles would have been excluded from His grace.

Prejudice Plagues All Races

People have a problem with prejudice even if God does not. Every country—and almost every person—has some problem. (Some keep it under control, while others express it freely.) The tension may be between black

and white, Latin and Anglo, Oriental and Occidental, citizens of one nation and those of another, or even different parts of the same country. Prejudice is indicated by the slang terms used by one group against another.

Look at prejudice among ancient people as reported in the Bible. There was separation between the Hebrews and the Egyptians when Joseph was prime minister of Egypt (Genesis 43:32). There was such prejudice between the Samaritans and the Jews during Jesus' personal ministry that they refused to welcome Him into the city of Samaria (Luke 9:51-56). There was prejudice among the Jews toward anyone who was born or lived in Nazareth, for they would ask, "*Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" (John 1:46). The tension between Jews and Samaritans was so great that "*the Jews [had] no dealings with the Samaritans*" (John 4:9). The lesson text for this study shows the way Jews felt toward Romans (Acts 11). God had to give Simon Peter a special revelation before he was willing to go preach to the Roman army officer named Cornelius (Acts 10). Then when the church in Jerusalem heard that he had done it, she called him to account for having gone (Acts 11). That was simply prejudice at work in many people on many occasions.

Prejudice is nothing new. It is a consequence of the sinful condition of the human race. Forgetting that each person is made in the image and likeness of God, each tends to think of himself as being superior to the others. Fear and that sense of superiority produces prejudice. But that is not God's way to look at other people. Here is the biblical view.

God Made All Races

All races have one Creator. Malachi 2:10 reads, "*Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?*" What was said about the prejudice of people of one nation can be said about people of every other nation. There was only one original human pair, Adam and Eve. We all have the same Creator and are of the same human family. Just as there are differences between the members of your personal family (size, height, color of hair and eyes, etc.), so there are differences between members of the human family. But as you do not reject a member of your family because of those differences, you must not reject another human.

All races have one common blood line. God "*hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth*" (Acts 17:26). There are many blood types (as A, B, O, etc.), but there is no White blood distinct from Black blood, no Anglo blood distinct from Latin blood, and no

Oriental blood distinct from Occidental blood. We are all of one blood because we are all descended from the same original human parents.

God makes no distinction between the races. He taught Simon Peter that He accepts people of every nation and that he “*should not call any man common or unclean*” (Acts 10:28). Read Acts 8—10 and watch for the absence of prejudice. God saved the mixed-blood Samaritans whom the Jews hated and an Ethiopian who was descended from Ham (Acts 8). He saved Saul of Tarsus, who was a descendant of Shem (Acts 9). He also saved Cornelius, a Gentile who was a descendant of Japheth (Acts 10).

God saves people from all three branches of the human family. He loves and saves black people like the Africans, brown people like the Jews and Arabs, white people like Americans and Europeans, and all shades of color in between. He saves them all the same way.

If someone objects, “There was segregation in the Old Testament,” the answer is “Yes, there was, but it was segregation based on religion.” The purpose of segregation was to keep pure the revelation of God through Israel. And God calls for that kind of segregation today, saying, “*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? . . . Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*” (II Corinthians 6:14, 17).

Christ Died for All Races

All races suffer the same problem of sin. Read Romans 1:18—3:20 and note that all people are guilty of sin. The human race is divided into two groups: Jew and Gentile. Then each group is examined with this conclusion: the Gentiles have sinned and need to be saved (Romans 1:18-32); the Jews have sinned and need to be saved (Romans 2:1—3:8); therefore, “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). No excuse can be given for any person or group of persons. Every mouth is stopped and the whole human race stands guilty before God. Where is the basis for prejudice?

All races have the same atonement in Jesus Christ. John said of Jesus, “*He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for our's only, but also for the sins of the whole world*” (I John 2:2). God does not have one sacrifice for salvation for Jews and another for Gentiles, one for blacks and another for whites, etc. Every person who comes to God for forgiveness of sin will come by repentance of sin and personal faith in Jesus Christ. There

is no other Savior. Where is the basis for prejudice?

All races need the same gospel. Therefore Jesus commissioned us, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). That *“every creature”* means all mankind without respect to any social distinctions which separate us. What does a foreign missionary preach? He preaches the same thing that we preach at home; there is but one gospel. That gospel is *“the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek”* (Romans 1:16). Where is the basis for prejudice?

All races receive the same forgiveness upon repentance of sin and faith in Jesus Christ. *“There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:12, 13). The invitation of God is *“whosoever will,”* without distinction between persons (Revelation 22:17). The marvel of grace is that Jesus' death on the cross brought salvation to all races, in all places, and in all times. Where is the basis for prejudice?

All races are saved the same way. God has only one plan of salvation: repentance of sin and personal faith in Jesus Christ. There is not one way for Jews to be saved and another way for Gentiles to be saved. Neither is there one way for one race and another way for another race among the Gentiles. Read Romans 3:21-31. (Please stop and read this passage very thoughtfully right now. Then continue reading these comments.) God gave Jesus as a propitiation (covering) for our sins. That provision is available to every one. *“Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God”* (I John 5:1). Where is the basis for prejudice?

Christ Ministers to All Races

You find Him ministering to Jews in Palestine. You find Him ministering to Gentiles in what is now Lebanon. You find Him ministering to the half-breed Samaritans whom the Jews hated so fiercely (John 4). He made no racial distinctions.

Before God, no one is excluded because of race (Acts 10:9-20). Among Christians, every one must be included in the reach of their love. The royal law of the Scriptures is that you love God with all your being and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37, 38; James 2:8). No one is considered second class before God on the basis of race (Galatians 3:26-29). Where is the basis for prejudice?

It is quite evident that racial prejudice is a social issue. There is no

basis in the Bible for distinction before God. As a Christian, you are free to choose your associates in social matters. There is nothing wrong in being closer to some people than to others, if your heart is right. You make those distinctions in your own race.

But you are not free to make distinctions in spiritual matters. You must receive any person whom God receives and can reject only those people whom God rejects. Christ must govern all of your attitudes. Follow Him and you will have no problem with prejudice. “*Ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28).

Questions for Discussion

1. What is racial prejudice?
2. How does it manifest itself in your area?
3. Why does it plague all races in all ages?
4. How can we say all races have the same Father?
5. How do we know that God makes no distinction between races?
6. Why do all races have the same spiritual problem?
7. How do we know Christ died for all races?
8. Why should we consider no person “unclean” as Peter did?
9. How can someone overcome personal racial prejudice?
10. How can you show the spirit of Christ in dealing with people of other races?