

What Does the Bible Teach About Prejudice and Judgment?

Thursday Indepth Bible Class of the
Trilacoochee church of Christ

June 3, 2021

What Is Prejudice?

- What is ignorance mistaken for reason?
- The first enemy of information and progress?
- Intellectual blurred vision?
- The perfect combination of conceit and ignorance?
- The defense of the Devil?
- The shield of the petrified mind?
- And the upper limit of understanding?
- Ladies and Gentlemen, let me introduce to you:
PREJUDICE!

What Is Prejudice?

- Prejudice - “1) a judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known; a preconceived idea; 2) a judgment or opinion held in disregard of the facts that contradict it; unreasonable bias; 3) suspicion, intolerance or hatred of other races, creeds, regions, occupations, etc” (Webster's New World Dictionary, p. 1122).
- Prokrima - “pre-judging; preferring one person, another being put aside, by unfavorable judgment due to partiality” (Vines, p. 204).
- Prokrima - “an opinion formed before the facts are known, a pre-judgment, a prejudice” (Thayer, 4299)

What Is Prejudice?

- Prejudice has existed for most of human history.
- It has destroyed families
- Started wars
- Taken many innocent lives
- Hindered the spread of the Gospel
- Condemned many souls
- It is at the root of many of the conflicts currently in existence all over the world.
- It is at the core of the current civil unrest experienced in the US on both sides of the debate.
- Appallingly, it has found a welcome home in many local churches of Christ

What Is Prejudice?

- It would be helpful for us to understand that prejudice is not limited to differences in race and color alone.
- Prejudice can also take the form of division based on income, education, background, perceived intellectual level, and visible social status.
- Prejudice over income and social status seems to be the primary form that afflicted the church in the first century
 - James 2:1-4

What Is Prejudice?

- James 2:1-4 - “My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality. 2 For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel, and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, 3 and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place,’ and say to the poor man, ‘You stand there,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool,’ 4 have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?”

What Is Prejudice?

- It was a sin to judge based on income in the Law of Moses
 - Lev. 19:15 - “You shall do no injustice in judgment. You shall not be partial to the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty. In righteousness you shall judge your neighbor.”
 - Deut. 1:17 - “You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small as well as the great; you shall not be afraid in any man's presence, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.”

What Is Prejudice?

- It is wrong in the New Testament to judge based on another's moral background
 - Rom. 2:11, 17-25 - “For there is no partiality with God... 17 Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, 18 and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, 19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. 21 You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,’ as it is written. 25 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.”

What Is Prejudice?

- The proud know God only at a distance, but the humble are respected by the Lord
 - Psalm 138:6 - “Though the LORD is on high, Yet He regards the lowly; But the proud He knows from afar.”
 - Prov. 24:23 - “These things also belong to the wise: It is not good to show partiality in judgment.”

What Is Prejudice?

- James calls prejudice a sin
 - James 2:9 - “But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.”
- Peter was rebuked for bigoted behavior
 - Gal. 2:11-13 - “Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; 12 for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. 13 And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.”

What Is Prejudice?

- Jesus died on the cross to do away with distinctions between Jews and Gentiles
 - Eph. 2:13-15 - “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

What Is Prejudice?

- Gal. 3:28 - “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”
- Col. 3:10-11 - “And have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”
- 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.’”

What Is Prejudice?

- Prejudice is condemnation without investigation.
 - It is a great time-saver; it allows us to develop convictions without gathering the facts.
 - Prejudice is a witness to witlessness. “Light travels at extraordinary speed until it reaches the human mind”
- I do not have a right to hold any prejudice in my heart; not only will it condemn my soul, but sooner or later it will hurt someone else.
 - “Oh Lord, may we always be right, for Thou knowest that we will never change.” (*Scottish Proverb*)

What Is Prejudice?

- How can the love of God abide in our hearts if we are respecters of persons?
 - 1John 4:16, 19-21 - “And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him... 19 We love Him because He first loved us. 20 If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? 21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.”

Is There A Difference Between Prejudice And Judgment?

- We have been conditioned all of our lives not to judge others; yet, seems to be a reflex action.
 - It is not wrong to make a judgment.
 - How, why, when, and what we make as judgments can be.

Is There A Difference Between Prejudice And Judgment?

- Confusing? At first glance, the scriptures seem to be of no help.
 - Matt. 7:1-2 - “Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you”
 - John 7:24 - “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment”

Is There A Difference Between Prejudice And Judgment?

- 1Cor. 6:5 - “I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?”
- 1Cor. 14:29 - “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”
- Col. 2:16 - “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths”

Is There A Difference Between Prejudice And Judgment?

- What is right?
 - Ecc. 3:1-11 - “To everything there is a season, A time for every purpose under heaven...”
 - 1Sam. 16:7 - “But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his 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’”
 - John 7:24 - “...Judge with righteous judgment”

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- "Don't judge me!"
- Actually what they are saying is "Don't condemn me for what I chosen." Or, "Don't form an adverse opinion of me."
- It is based on the perceived American right to be as lowdown as we want without anyone making us feel bad about it with a question.

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- Matt. 7:1-2 - “Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you”
- What does it mean?
 - Don't make judgments believing that no judgments will be made of you
 - We will be treated according to the way in which we treat others
 - Treating others with suspicion hides a guilty conscience
 - Treating others with harshness hides hypocrisy
 - Treating others without mercy means we get no mercy from God - James 2:13
 - Treating others with mercy means we will receive mercy from God - Matt. 5:7
 - There is nothing in this text that forbids judgment

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- John 7:24 - “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment”
- Is it contradictory?
 - It is not a ban against making judgments, but a command to make righteous judgments.
 - How does one judge with righteous judgment?
 - James 2:1-4 - It requires impartiality.
 - Matt. 7:3-5 - It mandates righteous living.
 - We are not at liberty to judge at random.
 - Nothing in this text forbids judgment.

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- 1Cor. 6:5 - “I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren?”
 - Instruction to judge legal matters between brethren.
 - The least brother is more qualified to do this than worldly judges.

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- 1Cor. 14:29 - “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge.”
 - Instruction to judge in matters of doctrine between brethren based on revealed truth
 - Gal. 1:8-9

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- Col. 2:16 - “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths”
 - Instruction not to judge one another over scruples of individual conscience.

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- How do we co-exist with brethren who have a scruple of conscience?
 - Patiently!
 - Rom. 14:1 - Receive them.
 - Isa. 35:3-4 - Strengthen them.
 - Rom. 14:1 - Do not cause trouble with disputes.
 - Rom. 14:3 - Tolerate their scruple of conscience until such time as they outgrow it.
 - Rom. 14:4,10 - Do not isolate him for his scruple of conscience.
 - Rom. 14:15; 1Cor. 8, 9:13, 10:33 - Surrender your liberty for the weak one's sake.

Why Is There So Much Confusion Over This?

- This is quite different than disagreement over a matter of doctrine. We do not judge them over a matter of conscience.
- There is nothing in this passage that forbids making judgments over error in doctrine.

What If?

- Ananias' prejudgment of Saul had held?
 - Acts 9:11-15
 - "Saul is just too dangerous to risk fellowship with him."
 - How many people have I allowed to go on to perdition because I judged them a risk to me and my own? - 1Cor. 15:9-10

What If?

- Jonah's prejudgment of Nineveh held?
 - Jonah 3:10 - 4:3
 - The entire city repented. Can the good even be measured?!
- How many have I turned away from because I judged them too wicked to be interested in the Gospel?
What gives me the right?!
 - We often become angry when our judgments turn out to be unjustified.
 - Some care more for the gourds of their opinions than for the souls of the lost - Jonah 4:5-11
 - Reckon what kind of judgment will we receive for this presumption?

How Can I Avoid Prejudice?

- Give others the benefit of the doubt for sincerity until they prove otherwise
 - Stop second guessing, questioning motives, etc., unless hard evidence is given to justify mistrust
 - 1Cor. 13:4-7 - “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; 6 does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”

How Can I Avoid Prejudice?

- Try to see life from their point of view.
 - God thought that was important enough that He sent Jesus to live as a man to see what it was like.
 - It will teach us mercy without sacrificing truth.
 - Actions may stem from reparable causes.
 - "Never attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity." (Or ignorance, weakness, thoughtlessness, accident)
 - Remember, the things we hate the most in others are most often the things we hate in ourselves.

How Can I Avoid Prejudice?

- Stop using confirmation bias.
 - Assimilate all of the facts, not just the ones that confirm what you already believe.
 - Learn to separate the facts from your conclusions on the facts.
- Pray for your brother's weakness.
 - Pray that you will learn to love others more and judge them less.
- "If you look for the good in someone, you will find it." (Abraham Lincoln)