

No True Christian is a Racist

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Some of the most disappointing moments in this writer's life have occurred when supposedly faithful Christians have made racially prejudiced comments in his presence. Although it is readily conceded that no Christian is beyond the possibility of committing a sin, it is nonetheless very disappointing when such a lack of love and understanding is displayed by one who professes to be a follower of our impartial, loving God.

OUR GOD IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

We should try to see other people as God does: *"...the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7). A person's skin color has absolutely no bearing on the judgment of God: *"...call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work..."* (1 Peter 1:17; cf. Luke 20:21; Romans 2:5-11; Galatians 2:6; Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 3:25). Although God has chosen certain individuals and nations to carry out His will in the past, it has always been God's desire for all men to be saved: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:3-4; cf. Ezekiel 18:23; 2 Peter 3:9; Matthew 28:19). Peter said, *"...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"* (Acts 10:34-35). All men have been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), and God lovingly accepts people from all nations. Therefore, if we are godly people, we should also be able to "accept" people of any ethnicity without pre-judging them because of something so superficial as skin color. *"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour"* (Ephesians 5:1-2; cf. 2 Peter 1:7-10).

Jesus commands us to *"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment"* (John 7:24), and Jesus is a great example of such impartial love and acceptance. The Bible records a Jewish lawyer "tempting" Christ:

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? (Luke 10:25-29).

This lawyer apparently did not treat all men with impartiality, so he asked our Lord, *"And who is my neighbor?"*. Jesus then taught the parable of the "good Samaritan." There was much contention between the Jews and Samaritans of Jesus' day, with most Jews looking down with arrogant pride upon the Samaritans, but Jesus taught that even a Samaritan could be a

good person—a good “neighbor.” The implication was that the Jews should have loved the Samaritans as they loved themselves (Luke 10:27). Regarding Jesus’ personal treatment of Samaritans, Jesus’ disciples were greatly surprised when Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:7ff). We also know that when Jesus cleansed the ten lepers, at least one of them was a Samaritan, because the only one who came back to thank Him was a Samaritan (Luke 17:16).

It is evident that many in the early days of the Lord’s church had difficulties overcoming the vice of being prejudiced. Even though Peter had uttered the words recorded in Acts 10:34-35 that were mentioned above, he would later have to be rebuked by Paul for behaving with hypocritical prejudice toward the Gentiles (Galatians 2:11-12). His actions also caused others to be led astray from the will of God (2:13).

What is the application for us from such Scriptures regarding the Jews and Samaritans, or the Jews and Gentiles as a whole? There can be “good” and “bad” people from any ethnicity, and we must love others as we love ourselves, regardless of their outward appearances or backgrounds. For example, the white person should love the black person as he loves himself, and the black person should love the white person as he loves himself. That love will be evident in the way we treat one another. Does this impartial, loving attitude reflect the attitude of your heart, reader, or do you harbor a lack of love for a certain group of people based solely on something such as their skin color?

“THAT IS JUST THE WAY I WAS RAISED”

It seems that a common excuse offered by those who are racially prejudiced is that their mindset is the result of their upbringing, and “that is just the way they are.” However, will such an excuse be accepted on the Judgment Day? Will Adolf Hitler be ushered into eternal bliss after saying, “That is just the way I was raised”? Such an excuse attempts to place all blame on those who brought up the child, but the Bible teaches that every man will stand accountable for his own actions, regardless of what those around him have done: *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him”* (Ezekiel 18:20; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10, et al.).

Surely any Jew could have used his upbringing as an excuse to justify his prejudice towards Samaritans, but Jesus’ teachings and exemplary actions left no room for such feeble excuses. Jesus knew very well the culture under which the Jewish lawyer had been reared, yet our Lord still commanded, *“Go, and do thou likewise”* (Luke 10:37). Peter could have said to Paul, “That is just the way I was raised,” but he would have been no less deserving of Paul’s rebuke (Galatians 2:11-14). Christ teaches us to love even those we may have been taught to hate: *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:43-44). We cannot choose whom we will love and whom we will not love!

Regardless of what we have been taught by people, we must allow ourselves to be

taught by God's Word. James gave all Christians, regardless of their upbringings, the following command: *"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons"* (James 2:1; cf. 1 Timothy 5:21). He went on to write,

If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:8-10).

James teaches us that a person can be a completely faithful Christian in all areas but this, and he may as well be guilty of breaking every command of God! Although James was using the example of preferential treatment of the wealthy over the poor, the same principles apply to those with racial prejudice. James also wrote, *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy"* (James 3:17). If one claims to be a follower of Christ, and yet remains a partial, racially prejudiced person, he does not have *"the wisdom that is from above,"* but according to the Bible he is a foolish hypocrite. There is no room in the heart of a Christian for racial prejudice! If one has such a hole in his heart, may he fill it with love before the Judgment Day (1 Corinthians 13:1-7). The duty of every Christian is to CHANGE if something in his life is contrary to the Scriptures. That is called repentance, and without it no person can be saved (Acts 17:30-31).

CONCLUSION

When it comes to people being divided, the only distinction that really matters is this: Are we in Christ, or outside of Christ? God's people are divided from the world (sanctified; set apart for a holy purpose) by following the Word of God (John 17:17; 1 Peter 2:9-10). Although there have been various divisions among men in the past, God wants all men to be one in Christ Jesus, regardless of their skin color, ancestries, or upbringings: *"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Galatians 3:26-28; cf. Colossians 3:11; John 3:16; Romans 1:14-16, et al.). Are you in Christ? If we are truly in Christ, let us keep walking in His steps, being living examples of impartial love.

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