

Pride and Prejudice Remain Classics Among Sins

The problem of prejudice is real. Sadly, even heroes of the faith like Peter have been guilty of it.

Prejudice is defined as *“preconceived opinion(s) that causes one to dislike, be hostile to or behave unjustly toward others.”*

We continue to find it along racial lines, social standing and religious background, and even among gender, age and sexual orientation. All too often, even Christians are guilty of prejudice.

“When Cephas [Peter] came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles.” (Gal. 2:11-12a, NIV)

Paul saw prejudice as sin, regardless of who was guilty of it. A telltale sign of prejudice is who you are eating or not eating with.

“But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group.” (Gal. 2:12b)

Prejudice is about drawing back and separating oneself from people who may not belong to our group or clique. This tendency is generally rooted in fear and insecurity. It eventually morphs into pride that says, “These people don’t belong to our group.”

Whether it’s racial prejudice or social cliques, the message is “You don’t deserve us.” But the worst case is religious prejudice that declares, “You are too dirty—too far

gone—and we're too holy and pure for you."

We alienate, if not isolate, sinners because of our religious prejudices. This is a vicious sin that prevents people from receiving the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"The rest of the Jews joined also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barabbas was carried away with their hypocrisy." (Gal. 2:13).

What empowers prejudice is hypocrisy—the claim of having a higher standard of being, belief or behavior. It is basically a pretense and a deceptive view of one's race, relations, religion or recognition. The danger with hypocrisy is it leads others astray and causes division rather than promoting love and unity.

"When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel ... " (Gal. 2:14a)

Prejudice is always visible in the way one acts toward others. It squelches the gospel. And Christians (like Peter) can be guilty of it. Actually, it is just pride in one of its ugliest and cheapest forms.

"I said to Cephas in front of them all, 'You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?'" (Gal. 2:14b)

There is no way around prejudice other than to violently confront it for what it is, just as Paul did. It is a pagan practice that is not the way of a disciple of Christ. The first person to confront is yourself. Frankly, we are all guilty of prejudice at various levels.

Then: *"We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. (Gal. 2:15-16a)*

Prejudice will hinder us from helping people become followers of Christ. Here's what to do when you see it in your own life: Acknowledge that you are not any more special than anyone else—not by your race, background or achievements—but that you are welcome before God because you have simply trusted in the finished work of Christ that is still working in you. We are all unfinished business in our journey of faith.

As you search your heart, simply repent and ask God to expose any prejudice and hypocrisy. Then ask Him to make you see that each person is an amazing creation made by God.

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