



Prejudice In God's Church?

Does Christianity have room for prejudice, intolerance and bigotry?

Maybe that sounds like a needless question. But, sad to say, many people live as though they think it does. You might say that some Christians appear to have two faces: One when they are talking religion and another when they are talking life.

The Apostles taught that if we really do believe in Jesus' death for us and that our sins are forgiven, we will devote our lives to His service – to become like Him. It is true, of course, that no one will ever be perfect in this life, but true Christians will be learning to think of others in the same way they have come to realize how Jesus thinks of everyone.

If we are truly Christians, we are to be shedding our arrogance toward others we once felt were not as "good" or perhaps not as "righteous" as we think we are. This is Paul's message in Ephesians 4:28-5:2.

Looking down on others because we feel superior to them, whether spiritually or even in some physical way, is the exact antithesis of all Jesus Christ stands for, and all He did for humanity, including each of us personally. We certainly cannot claim His merciful and forgiving sacrifice on our own behalf and then go out and treat others in precisely the opposite manner.

If He lives in us, we will be living a new way of life, a way that cares about others and is growing in love toward all others. When we fall short, we are to throw ourselves on God's mercy and carry on, continually striving to remove the ways of the former self.

Such love is fair, kind, and generous to all. It is not limited by the barriers of office, position, economic status, nationality, race, sex, sinful past or even religion. How can we look down our noses at other human beings if the love of God is in us?

The parable of the man who was forgiven the enormous debt in Matthew 18:23-35 should be a constant reminder of our Christian obligation to forgive. It is when we feel our most "righteous," because we look down on someone else whose sin we think we could never sink so low as to commit, that we are indeed weakest spiritually.

If we abide in God's love, we will extend it to others. We will so deeply appreciate God's limitless love for us that we simply cannot bear malice towards others. As God forgave each of us so great a debt, so we too should be pleased to forgive others. As God loves us, so we are enabled by His Spirit to love others also. This is such a fundamental theme of true Christianity that it can never be overemphasized.

"And whatever you do in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17). Is there room for prejudice, intolerance and bigotry in God's Church? NO, unless there is also room for hypocrisy and hatred. If we are truly children of God, let us daily renew our commitment to live honestly in His Love.