SHATTERING YOUR CHURCH'S PREJUDICIAL BARRIERS

A Study by Pastor Vincent Sawyer
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Introduction: What is prejudice?

Prejudice is the sin of pre-judging a person based on a superficial, non-moral, exterior, surface evaluation. Prejudice evaluates externals over internals and often esteems the temporal over the eternal.

I. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF RACIAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must extol righteousness over race)

(Key Text: Acts 10:9-48)

***Don't glory in your people (Beware of national pride)**

II. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF COLOR SUPREMACY

(God's people must esteem the soul over the skin)

(Key Texts: Gen. 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9; Mark 8:37-37)

***Don't glory in your appearance (Beware of carnal pride)**

III. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF SOCIAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must respect a man's principle over his popularity)

(Key Text: I Cor. 1:24-31)

***Don't glory in your fame and notoriety (Beware of social pride)**

IV. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF CULTURAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must honor character and conduct over culture and custom)

(Key Text: I Cor. 9:19-23)

***Don't glory in your ways of doing things (Beware of cultural pride)**

V. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF ECONOMIC SUPREMACY

(God's people must value a person's worth over his wealth)

(Key Text: James 2:1-13)

***Don't glory in your status (Beware of material pride)**

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Introduction:

Our world (and particularly our country) is seeing a co-mingling of peoples. A multiculturalism has been born.

A multitude of racial groups have landed on our shores, and this provides us with a great opportunity to impact the world right on our door step. This door will close in their face if we allow prejudice to control our perspective and attitudes toward these of a diverse background or color.

To be prejudiced is to pre-judge a person without knowing any facts about his/her own personal character.

Prejudice is judging a book by its cover without seeing the contents of its pages.

What is prejudice?

Prejudice is the sin of pre-judging a person based on a superficial, non-moral, exterior, surface evaluation. Prejudice evaluates externals over internals and often esteems the temporal over the eternal.

Biblical examples of people who made erroneous pre-judgments:

--Abraham toward Abimelech (Gen. 20:11)
--Joshua toward the Gibeonites (Josh. 9)
--Satan toward Job (Job 1:11, 2:5)
--Israel toward Saul (I Sam. 10:23-24)
--Goliath toward David (I Sam. 17:42-44)

--Pharisees toward John (for not eating & drinking) and Jesus (for eating & drinking)

How quick people are to judge (become critical of) a person based on:

--the clothing he/she wears
(which is not necessarily an indication of the heart)
--the car he/she drives
--the Bible version he/she carries to church
(those who prefer the KJV are often judged as antiquated and uneducated, while those who read the NASV are judged to be liberal or at best New Evangelical)
--the denominational label attached to his/her church
--facial hair
(beard - a symbol of rebellion; Beware: Mormons are as clean-cut as you can get!)

*Outward appearance vs. the heart
(I Sam. 16:7)

*Labels vs. inner reality
(cp. Mark 9:38-40)
--Denominational labels are sometimes misleading (Emmanuel Gospel Church; many Baptists in NYC are heretical)

--A man's degrees (Ph.D., Th.M., etc.) are not necessarily indicative of his qualifications

(Labels are important [EX: at grocery store], but are not necessarily accurate descriptions of the true content of the man or ministry.)

Prior to having a clear understanding about a person, what attitude should we have toward him? Suspicion? Skepticism? Or love? (I Cor. 13:7)

Prejudice is "thinking negatively of others without sufficient justification. Prejudice is the process of stereotyping, by which certain characteristics, either positive or negative, are ascribed to all members of a group." (Gordon Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (1954), cited by Breckenridge, "What Color is Your God?" p. 61)

Jesus described the heart of prejudice very succinctly when He said: *"Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment"* (John 7:24). The word *"appearance"* is derived from the word *opsis* (akin to "optic," the eye), which refers to that which you see, outward appearance, the outward aspect of a person, his face (Jn. 11:44) or countenance.

To the legalistic Pharisees, who were making a judgment of Him for healing a man on the Sabbath, Christ said, in effect, "Stop judging based on outward, face value, external

criteria, and make decisions about Me based on the truth and righteousness of my actions.

The Bible does not teach that we should not judge; indeed, we must have discernment and make discriminatory judgments (I Thes. 5:21; Rev. 2:2; I Cor. 5:5-11; Rom. 16:17; John 7:24).

However, we are never to judge with a nasty, unmerciful, harsh, censorious, critical, and condemning attitude (Mt. 7:1), nor are we to prematurely discriminate against a particular person or situation without having all the facts about that person or situation.

No discerning man of God should make inalterable pre-evaluations about anything without seeking the truth and concrete evidence about a man or matter.

". . . the honor of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. 25:2).

The noble Bereans did not just take Paul's word for it; they *"searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (Acts 17:11).

God's Word is clear about the folly of making judgments about any matter before obtaining the specific facts (cp. Prov. 18:13).

The basic, underlying, core cause of prejudice is sinful pride. How we view "self" will influence how we view others. People naturally love themselves; it is part of man's selfish nature to elevate self and anything related to ourselves. Our egotistical pride will therefore favor others who look like us, act like us, have some resource or material that will benefit us. At the heart of prejudice is a vain idolatry, an attitude of supremacy.

It is a sinful tendency (of fallen, depraved humanity) to think of themselves--and hence their nationality, race, or color--as being superior to others.

Examples:

--The Greeks during the time of Alexander the Great
--The Romans during the time of the Caesars
--The Germans during the time of Adolph Hitler
--The Klu Klux Klan of today
--The Nation of Islam (Louis Farrakan) and the Black Israelite movement of today

Why is prejudice so wicked?

>It often extols race over righteousness

>It often esteems color over character

>It often respects popularity over principle

>It often glorifies culture over conduct

>It often values wealth over worth

>It often evaluates externals not internals

>It often smacks of evolution over creationism

>It often promotes division over unity

>It often instigates strife rather than peace/harmony

>It often elevates nationalistic pride over Christ-like humility

People behave in response to what they believe (how people act toward others is a manifestation of the belief system they hold to). A flawed or skewed theology will result in an erroneous view of God, self, and others.

I. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF RACIAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must extol righteousness over race)

(Key Text: Acts 10:9-48)

***Don't glory in your people (Beware of national pride)**

Jew and Gentile are equal in the body of Christ. (Rom. 2:11 - *"For there is no respect of persons with God."*) God does not show racial favoritism (nor should we!) (v. 34)

Why not? 4 Evidences:

1. GOD'S APPROVAL IS TOWARD ALL (V. 9-16)
   (All men, whether Jew or Gentile, are kosher with God)

   ILLUS: of talking to a Hasidic Jew in Israel (June 2, 1988), whom I characterized as being: 1) twisted in Oral Tradition (the Mishna); 2) believed in works righteousness; 3) proud nationalism (being one of the "elect nation"--Israel--and a pious one at that). **Much like a Pharisee in

Christ's day.

Peter had a nationalistic pride that God would have to erode. God would have to prepare Peter to let him know that He accepted all - Jew and Gentile on an equal basis.

2. GOD'S MESSAGE IS FOR ALL (V. 17-33)
(All men have the right to hear the Word of God)

3. GOD'S GRACE IS FOR ALL (V. 34-43)
(All men can be forgiven by the Son of God)

   a. GOD GRACIOUSLY INVITES ALL (V. 34-35)
   b. GOD GRACIOUSLY GAVE HIS SON FOR ALL (V. 36-42)
   c. GOD GRACIOUSLY FORGIVES ALL WHO BELIEVE (V. 43)

4. GOD'S SPIRIT IS FOR ALL (V. 44-48)
(All believers are baptized by the Spirit of God)

The Christian's identity should not be "in his people," but "in Christ."

No servant of God can tolerate the sin of racial discrimination in his life.

All of us discriminate on a daily basis (i.e. we make judgments or decisions to choose on thing over another based on reasonable criteria; example: the supermarket, the car to buy, the school to attend, the boy to marry, the truth to believe, etc.).

Discrimination is not wrong (on moral matters, on stewardship matters).

However, racial discrimination is wrong (note: racial discrimination and homosexual discrimination are not the same issue. Why? You did not have a choice as to your skin color, but you do have a choice as to the lifestyle you choose to live.).

1. No racism (because all men are created equal) (Gen. 1:27)
2. No nationalistic pride (because our citizenship is in Heaven) (Phil. 3:20)

*Don't nurture an attitude of ethnic supremacy.

Beware of the influences of the "White Supremists" -
--Klu Klux Clan
--Hitler mentality
--Gloria Sanger
--Deep South USA prejudice
Beware of the influences of the "Black Supremists" -
--Black Israelites
--Black Muslims (Louis Farrakan's Nation of Islam)
--Black Pride movements
(Black heritage Bibles, etc.)

II. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF COLOR SUPREMACY

(God's people must esteem the soul over the skin)

(Key Texts: Gen. 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9; Mark 8:37-37)

***Don't glory in your appearance (Beware of carnal pride)**

Realize that the essence of each human being does not consist in their skin color, size, shape, sex, or social status -- but in their soul/spirit.

*Realize the incredible value of a human soul!

1. Every person has been made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27; 9:6).

a. "Image" ("tselem") - points to man's personality features that are reproductions of God's spiritual, intellectual, and moral qualities.

b. "Likeness" ("demuth") - points to man as not being the same as God, but as being similar in pattern or model.

c. Why does God use both words, "image" and "likeness?"

> To avoid the implication that man is a precise copy of God, albeit in miniature, the less specific and more abstract word "demuth" ("likeness") was added by God. "Demuth" then defines and limits the meaning of "tselem" (Humbert, Barr, T.W.O.T. Vol. 1, p. 192).

d. Man bears the image of God in three senses:

1) Man is like God in that he is a person (with personality). A "person" is a being who possesses self-consciousness, self-determination, intellect, emotion, will, world-consciousness, etc.

2) Man is like God in that he has a spirit (Jn. 4:24; I Cor. 6:20; cp. Eph. 4:23-24).
3) Man is like God in that he has a moral nature (a basic, innate comprehension of right and wrong - Rom. 2:14; Eccl. 7:29).

When Adam sinned the image of God in man was marred and defiled but was not obliterated.

*Since mankind still retains this sense of the image of God, his life has a dignity and is to be respected, honored, and protected. Doing so honors the Creator (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9).

2. Every person has a soul-spirit which is of more value than all the wealth of the world (Mt. 16:26; Mk. 8:36, 37).

Improper definition of man:
"Man is a body who has a soul/spirit"

Accurate definition of man:
"Man is a soul/spirit who has a body"

The SOUL

Hebrew - נפש ("nephesh")
Greek - ψυχη ("psuche")

The "soul" is the immaterial aspect of man that gives him life (Gen. 2:7 - "...Man became a living soul" ["nephesh"]).

The SPIRIT

Hebrew - רוח ("ruach")
Greek - πνευμα ("pneuma")

NOTE: The words "ruach" and "pneuma" in certain contexts are translated wind or breath (cp. Jn. 3:8; Rev. 11:11) because there is a parallel between the spirit and the wind or breath. "The spirit, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial, and powerful" (Vine, Expository Dictionary).

a. The "spirit" is the immaterial aspect of man that gives him a capacity to know and enjoy God.

1) We know God via the spirit (I Cor. 2:10-14).
2) We serve God with our spirit (Rom. 1:9 12:11)
3) Our spirit belongs to God (I Cor. 6:20)
4) The Holy Spirit bears witness to our human spirit (Rom. 8:16)
5) We pray and sing to God via the spirit (I Cor. 14:15)
6) God's grace is with our spirit (Gal. 6:18; Phil. 4:23)
7) God's son Jesus Christ is with our spirit (II Tim. 4:22)
8) We are saved by God in our spirit (I Cor. 5:5)
9) Upon death, our spirit goes to Heaven (Acts 7:59 - Note: the "soul" does also - Rev. 6:9)

b. Man's "spirit" is not to be equated with the "Holy Spirit."

Our spirit is distinct from the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit ministers to the Christian by means of his human spirit, and the Holy Spirit lives in believers; but yet He is a distinct person.

God's Spirit does not need to be sanctified (He already is!), but our spirit must be (I Thes. 5:23).

c. Unsaved man does have a spirit, but it is "dead" in it relationship to God and its receptivity to God.

All unsaved do have a spirit, the problem is that it is not working in relationship to God. It is "dead" (Eph.2:1-5) and needs to be renewed to life (Eph. 4:23)

Is there a difference (distinction) between man's soul and spirit?

Answer: Yes. Key Text: **I Thessalonians 5:23**

God divides "soul and spirit" in Heb. 4:12; I Cor. 2:14-15 and 15:44; and Luke 1:46-47.

What is the difference (distinction) between man's soul and spirit?

The "Spirit" is the immaterial (invisible) part of man that can relate to God (the spiritual realm).

The "Soul" is the immaterial part of man that relates to this life (the natural realm).

3. Every person's soul will live on for eternity

a. The souls of the saved are with the Lord (Gen.35:18; II Cor.5:8; Acts 7:59)

b. The souls of the lost are experiencing <u>eternal anguish & suffering</u> (Mt. 10:28; Rev. 14:11; 20:14,15)

Racism over skin color is foolish because a "soul" has no color and the soul/spirit is the essence of a man!

III. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF <u>SOCIAL</u> SUPREMACY

(God's people must respect a man's <u>principle</u> over his <u>popularity</u>)

(Key Text: I Cor. 1:24-31)

***Don't glory in your <u>fame</u> and <u>notoriety</u> (Beware of <u>social</u> pride)**

The Corinthians' main problem was "I" trouble. "I am this; I can do that; I am better than you are" etc. They were *"puffed up"* with pride (I Cor. 4:6, 18-19; 5:2).
In these first three chapters, Paul <u>deflates</u> their pride and elevates, magnifies, and exalts God.

Note the previous context:
In verses 17-25, the Apostle Paul portrayed <u>the message of God</u> (*"the preaching of the cross"* - v. 18) as being <u>weak</u> in men's eyes, but <u>mighty</u> in God's eyes.

Now in verses 26-31, he portrays <u>the people of God</u> as being <u>weak</u> in the world's eyes, but <u>blessed</u> in God's eyes.
Continuing with the intention to deflate the Corinthians' vain pride and to humble those who glory in men, Paul shows the type of people God saves and uses for His glory.

God not only has a <u>message</u> the unsaved, perishing world regards as *"foolish"* (v. 18, 21, 23, 25), but He also has <u>messengers</u> they mighty view as foolish.

God not only has a <u>gospel</u> the godless, unconverted, lost, pagan world would disregard, but He has a <u>people</u> that often don't add up to much in the world's estimation.

God is <u>not</u> desperately "looking for millionaires or famous athletes or entertainers or statesmen" as if He needed their money, fame, fortune, or talent to get His work done!

The Lord specializes in converting simple folk, common people, the under-privileged, the down-and-outers, the project kids, and other looked-down-upon groups.

Some might say: "That's because they are the only ones dumb enough to believe the Bible."

No, actually, they are the only ones <u>humble</u> enough to believe!
Jesus said, *"I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes."* (Mt. 11:25).

God delights in taking a <u>Sarah</u> who could not bear children and making her the mother of one of the largest races on earth (Gen. 18:14, 32:12)

God delights in taking a humble slave like <u>Joseph</u> and elevating him second to Pharaoh over Egypt (Gen. 41:38-44).

God delights in enlisting 300 soldiers of Gideon to fight and conquer 120,000 Mideanites (Jud. 7:2, 7, 12; 8:10) (NOTE: 400 to 1 odds).

God delights in utilizing a Samson to destroy 1,000 wicked Philistines with a jawbone of a donkey (Jud. 15:16).

God delights in using a red-headed, freckle-faced, baby-faced (I Sam. 17:42) shepherd boy named David to wipe out a 9'9" fully armored Philistine named Goliath (I Sam. 17).

God delights in providing adequate food for a poor widow of Zarephath who only had a few drops of oil and a handful of grain (I Ki. 17:9ff).

God delights in using three Hebrew youths to show up King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan. 3).

God delights in using as His mouthpiece a John the Baptist, "who had no formal education, no training in a trade or profession, no money, no military rank, no political position, no social pedigree, no impressive appearance (or diet!)" (MacArthur, p. 51). Yet Jesus said, *"Truly I say to you, among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist"* (Mt. 11:11).

God delights in taking a boy's lunch consisting of two sardines and five bite-size biscuits to feed 5,000 men besides women and children (Mt. 14:17-19).
"Little is much when God is in it." -- Conversely, much is little, if God is not in it!

God delights in taking unlearned, ignorant, dumb fishermen from Galilee and turning them into the most bold and influential mortals ever to spread the Gospel message (Acts 4:13).

* *God can take someone the world views as a "nobody" and make a somebody out of him! ... He can take something the world views as "nothing" and make something out of it!*

Why?

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

1. To display His wisdom & power (v.24-26)
2. To shame the wisdom of this world (v.27-28)
3. To strip man of his proud boasting (v.29)
4. To glorify His Son -- Jesus Christ (v.30)
5. To fulfill His Word (v.31)

"Thus saith the Lord,

Let not the <u>wise man</u>
glory in his wisdom,
neither let the <u>mighty man</u>
glory in his might,
let not the <u>rich man</u>
glory in his riches:
But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth:
for in these things I delight,
saith the Lord."
(Jeremiah 9:23-24)

IV. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF <u>CULTURAL</u> SUPREMACY

(God's people must honor <u>character</u> and <u>conduct</u> over <u>culture</u> and <u>custom</u>)

(Key Text: I Cor. 9:19-23)

***Don't glory in your <u>ways</u> of doing things (Beware of <u>cultural</u> pride)**

Paul, rather than forcing the Gentiles to embrace His Jewish culture and customs, made personal sacrifices and adjustments to spread the Gospel inside of the culture he ministered to without doctrinal or moral compromise.

Paul chose to <u>adjust</u> his <u>methodologies</u>

so that he would reach more people, without compromising his message or Biblical convictions (v.19-23)

V. 19

In verses 19-22, the phrase *"that I might gain"* occurs five times.
Paul's heart was fixed on gaining souls for Christ.

"Free from all men" - Although Paul did <u>not</u> have to live to suit anyone's customs, cultural practices, or mannerisms, he freely chose to serve them by adapting to their non-moral distinctions so as to win them for Christ.

V. 20

--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the <u>Jew</u> to win them (he would perhaps eat kosher foods, wear a beanie on his head, speak the Hebrew which he knew, observe the Sabbath, etc. Observe certain Old Testament Jewish Laws [not with the intent of gaining salvation]).

V. 21

--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the Gentile to win them (when in a Gentile's home, Paul did not rise up at the hour of prayer, face Jerusalem and begin praying; he didn't fulfill Old Testament civil and ceremonial laws, which were done away with and fulfilled at the cross. He lived by the Law of Love when in a Gentile's house.

V. 22

--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the weak to win them (the "weak" in context would include the one with a weak conscience toward idols [i.e.:9-12]; Paul would not engage in any practice which would violate the conscience of anyone.)

"I am made all things to all men" **-** This does not involve Biblical compromise on doctrine, dogma, or clearly-defined moral issues.

This does not involve adaptations for fleshly purposes (i.e. "When in Rome do as the Romans do.").

It does involve adjustments in technique, methodology, and custom for the Gospel's sake.
What does it mean to *"be all things to all men"*? It means:

1. A willingness to allow for differences (not everyone has to "do Christianity" just like an American; how willing are you to accommodate the differences of others without ignoring or violating God's moral law?)

2. A willingness to bend on non-moral issues (compromise on preferences, never on principles)

3. A willingness to adjust your ways of doing things so that you can conform to the culture you are ministering in, without Biblical compromise (be flexible).

4. A willingness to be open to new methodologies

Our authority is "sola scriptura," not any man's culture.

We should consider these principles of cross-cultural ministry as given by Reuben H. Brooks:

1) The Bible shows no ethnically pure "correct" culture.
2) As in the Bible, so today we should accept people from every culture and

ethnic group as our neighbors and treat them with mutual respect and dignity.

3) The Old Testament Scripture is replete with examples of a transcultural Gospel.

4) The New Testament does not show one culture to be the correct one and all others wrong.

5) The true message of Christianity is a person, Jesus Christ.

6) To cross into other cultures is the expected norm for God's people, not the exception.

(Breckenridge, p. 77)

V. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF <u>ECONOMIC</u> SUPREMACY

(God's people must value a person's <u>worth</u> over his <u>wealth</u>)

(Key Text: James 2:1-13)

***Don't glory in your <u>status</u> (Beware of <u>material</u> pride)**

First impressions of people are <u>not</u> always accurate impressions.

ILLUS: The man who looked like a vagabond and was seeking a bank that would help him begin a savings account. At the first bank he tried, no one took him seriously.

Then he tried another bank. "Can we help you?" "Yes, I would like to deposit my fortune in your bank." He was a multi-millionaire! (from "Dear Abby")

"So, what do you do for a living?" The question is often asked. And then a judgment is made about the individual based on his answer.

First time impressions are rarely correct.

60% of those in the Roman Empire were of the poor/slave class.

"Respect of persons" = lit. to "receive the face"; to show partiality, personal favoritism.

"Respect of persons" = a biased judgment, based on external appearances or circumstances such as race, wealth, social rank, or popularity while not looking at the person's internal true worth (value).

"Respect of persons" - to judge people superficially rather than on the basis of their true worth in God's sight.

Deut. 1:16, 17 - God commanded the judges to *"judge righteously between every man and his brother . . . Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man . . ."*

YOU MUST NOT HAVE PARTIALITY! (v. 1)
Why not? 4 Reasons:

1. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU HAVE A WRONG VALUE SYSTEM** (v. 2-4)

V. 4 - "Judges" - you need to judge a person's worth as God judges it (He is an immortal soul, created in the image of God).
"Evil thoughts" Sinful motives. Can this happen in a Church today? Yes!
When special attention is given to the rich in hopes that they will give money liberally.
Social and economic distinctions should be wiped out by the Gospel.
In the early church, there must have been a sense of awkwardness when the master would sit next to his slave; or if the slave led the service in which his master was but a member of the congregation. We have a tendency to cater to the rich because we hope to get something out of them, and to avoid the poor because they embarrass us.

2. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU ARE INCONSISTENT** (v. 5 - 7)

a. THEOLOGICALLY - INCONSISTENT WITH THE METHOD OF GOD (v.5- 6a)
   1) Those you reject, God selects (v. 5).
   2) Those you reject, you dishonor (v. 6a).

b. LOGICALLY - inconsistent with practice of the rich.

   1) Those you favor, oppress you (v. 6b).
   2) Those you favor, dishonor God (v. 7)

3. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU BREAK THE ROYAL LAW OF LOVE** (V. 8-11).

4. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU ARE GUILTY OF HYPOCRISY** (v. 12-13).

Your practice (treatment of others) must be consistent with how Christ treated you. Did he show special favor to you because of any wealth, gifts, abilities, etc. that you had? -- NO!

Application to Soul-winning -
Ask yourself:

1) Am I as interested in the salvation of a poor man as one who is rich? (i.e. - "weird vs. normal")

2) Am I willing to put as much effort into the winning of one who is uncultured as one who is educated?

3) Am I more excited when a person gets saved who is talented, gifted (a potential leader) as when one with limited gifts gets saved? (Look at their potential! - What God can make them)

Conclusion:

Basically, what is needed for your church to overthrow its prejudice is:

1. A right view of self and others
   (A Biblical anthropology)

2. A right view of God
   (A Biblical theology)

3. A right view of salvation
   (A Biblical soteriology)

**Needed: A Right Theology

In God's eyes, all lines of distinction, all supposed marks of superiority are non-existent.

"For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11).

Jesus did not show partiality. Even His enemies admitted: *"Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men."* (Matt. 22:16b)

a. God shows no partiality in judging men
(Rom. 2:9-11 - *"Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God."*)

b. God shows no partiality in describing men (Rom. 3:9-23)
(Rom. 3:9-10 - *"What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.")*

**Needed: A Right Soteriology

God shows no partiality in saving men (Rom. 3:24-31).

Gal. 3:26-28 - *"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."*

All races are accepted by God and saved on an equal level (Gal. 3:26-28).

Do you view yourself as a debtor to all people (indebted to reach all with the Gospel)?

Rom. 1:14 - *"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise."*

All races are equal in the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13).

Prejudice has adversely affected evangelism, because it has produced:

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A concluding practical encouragement:

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4. Fulfill the Great Commission by witnessing to *"every creature"* (Mk. 16:15) and by making disciples of "*all nations"* (Mt. 28:19) (look at people from God's perspective).

5. Beware of telling foolish racial jokes and using demeaning, derogatory speech about others of diverse ethnic origin (Eph. 5:4) (Be careful about making broad,

sweeping statements, such as "All _____ are _____")

The cultural tendencies of a particular nation or ethnic group, are not necessarily hard and fast absolutes about everyone in that group. Beware of making categorical statements.

We don't need to worry about becoming "politically correct" (although we should be Biblical considerate). Let's concern ourselves with being "spiritually correct."

6. Allow for cultural differences in non-doctrinal, non-moral areas of life.

7. Encourage the parents of your church to teach their children by example and precept to have an unprejudiced view of others (prejudice is primarily learned behavior, and it is most often learned from one's parents).

8. Mingle and visit with every one in your church (beware of cliques of any type) (Rom. 15:7).

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10. Appreciate and utilize the wholesome diversity that exists in the church (I Cor. 12).

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SHATTERING YOUR CHURCH'S PREJUDICIAL BARRIERS

A Study by Pastor Vincent Sawyer
Faith Baptist Church, Corona, Queens, NY

Introduction: What is prejudice?

Prejudice is the sin of pre-judging a person based on a superficial, non-moral, exterior, surface evaluation. Prejudice evaluates externals over internals and often esteems the temporal over the eternal.

I. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF RACIAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must extol righteousness over race)

(Key Text: Acts 10:9-48)

***Don't glory in your people (Beware of national pride)**

II. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF COLOR SUPREMACY

(God's people must esteem the soul over the skin)

(Key Texts: Gen. 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9; Mark 8:37-37)

***Don't glory in your appearance (Beware of carnal pride)**

III. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF SOCIAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must respect a man's principle over his popularity)

(Key Text: I Cor. 1:24-31)

***Don't glory in your fame and notoriety (Beware of social pride)**

IV. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF CULTURAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must honor character and conduct over culture and custom)

(Key Text: I Cor. 9:19-23)

***Don't glory in your <u>ways</u> of doing things (Beware of <u>cultural</u> pride)**

V. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF <u>ECONOMIC</u> SUPREMACY

(God's people must value a person's <u>worth</u> over his <u>wealth</u>)

(Key Text: James 2:1-13)

***Don't glory in your <u>status</u> (Beware of <u>material</u> pride)**

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Introduction:

Our world (and particularly our country) is seeing a co-mingling of peoples. A multiculturalism has been born.

A multitude of racial groups have landed on our shores, and this provides us with a great opportunity to impact the world right on our door step. This door will close in their face if we allow prejudice to control our perspective and attitudes toward these of a diverse background or color.

To be prejudiced is to pre-judge a person without knowing any facts about his/her own personal character.

Prejudice is judging a book by its cover without seeing the contents of its pages.

What is <u>prejudice</u>?

Prejudice is the sin of <u>pre-judging</u> a person based on a superficial, non-moral, exterior, surface evaluation. Prejudice evaluates <u>externals</u> over <u>internals</u> and often esteems the

temporal over the eternal.

Biblical examples of people who made erroneous pre-judgments:

--Abraham toward Abimelech (Gen. 20:11)
--Joshua toward the Gibeonites (Josh. 9)
--Satan toward Job (Job 1:11, 2:5)
--Israel toward Saul (I Sam. 10:23-24)
--Goliath toward David (I Sam. 17:42-44)
--Pharisees toward John (for not eating & drinking) and Jesus (for eating & drinking)

Prejudice is "thinking negatively of others without sufficient justification. Prejudice is the process of stereotyping, by which certain characteristics, either positive or negative, are ascribed to all members of a group." (Gordon Allport, The Nature of Prejudice (1954), cited by Breckenridge, "What Color is Your God?" p. 61)

Jesus described the heart of prejudice very succinctly when He said: *"Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment"* (John 7:24). The word *"appearance"* is derived from the word *opsis* (akin to "optic," the eye), which refers to that which you see, outward appearance, the outward aspect of a person, his face (Jn. 11:44) or countenance.

To the legalistic Pharisees, who were making a judgment of Him for healing a man on the Sabbath, Christ said, in effect, "Stop judging based on outward, face value, external criteria, and make decisions about Me based on the truth and righteousness of my actions.

The Bible does not teach that we should not judge; indeed, we must have discernment and make discriminatory judgments (I Thes. 5:21; Rev. 2:2; I Cor. 5:5-11; Rom. 16:17; John 7:24).

However, we are never to judge with a nasty, unmerciful, harsh, censorious, critical, and condemning attitude (Mt. 7:1), nor are we to prematurely discriminate against a particular person or situation without having all the facts about that person or situation.

No discerning man of God should make inalterable pre-evaluations about anything without seeking the truth and concrete evidence about a man or matter.

The basic, underlying, core cause of prejudice is sinful pride. How we view "self" will influence how we view others. People naturally love themselves; it is part of man's selfish nature to elevate self and anything related to ourselves. Our egotistical pride will therefore favor others who look like us, act like us, have some resource or material that will benefit us. At the heart of prejudice is a vain idolatry, an attitude of supremacy.

It is a sinful tendency (of fallen, depraved humanity) to think of themselves--and hence their nationality, race, or color--as being superior to others.

People behave in response to what they believe (how people act toward others is a manifestation of the belief system they hold to). A flawed or skewed theology will result in an erroneous view of God, self, and others.

I. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF RACIAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must extol righteousness over race)

(Key Text: Acts 10:9-48)

***Don't glory in your people (Beware of national pride)**

Jew and Gentile are equal in the body of Christ. (Rom. 2:11 - *"For there is no respect of persons with God."*) God does not show racial favoritism (nor should we!) (v. 34)

Why not? 4 Evidences:

1. GOD'S APPROVAL IS TOWARD ALL (V. 9-16)
   (All men, whether Jew or Gentile, are kosher with God)
   Peter had a nationalistic pride that God would have to erode. God would have to prepare Peter to let him know that He accepted all -

Jew and Gentile on an equal basis.

2. GOD'S MESSAGE IS FOR ALL (V. 17-33)
(All men have the right to hear the Word of God)

3. GOD'S GRACE IS FOR ALL (V. 34-43)
(All men can be forgiven by the Son of God)

a. GOD GRACIOUSLY INVITES ALL (V. 34-35)
b. GOD GRACIOUSLY GAVE HIS SON FOR ALL (V. 36-42)
c. GOD GRACIOUSLY FORGIVES ALL WHO BELIEVE (V. 43)

4. GOD'S SPIRIT IS FOR ALL (V. 44-48)
(All believers are baptized by the Spirit of God)

The Christian's identity should not be "in his people," but "in Christ."

No servant of God can tolerate the sin of racial discrimination in his life.

All of us discriminate on a daily basis (i.e. we make judgments or decisions to choose on thing over another based on reasonable criteria; example: the supermarket, the car to buy, the school to attend, the boy to marry, the truth to believe, etc.).

Discrimination is not wrong (on moral matters, on stewardship matters).

However, racial discrimination is wrong (note: racial discrimination and homosexual discrimination are not the same issue. Why? You did not have a choice as to your skin color, but you do have a choice as to the lifestyle you choose to live.).

II. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF COLOR SUPREMACY

(God's people must esteem the soul over the skin)

(Key Texts: Gen. 1:27, 9:6; James 3:9; Mark 8:37-37)

***Don't glory in your appearance (Beware of carnal pride)**

Realize that the essence of each human being does not consist in their skin

color, size, shape, sex, or social status -- but in their soul/spirit.

*Realize the incredible value of a human soul!

1. Every person has been made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:27; 9:6).

a. "Image" ("tselem") - points to man's personality features that are reproductions of God's spiritual, intellectual, and moral qualities.

b. "Likeness" ("demuth") - points to man as not being the same as God, but as being similar in pattern or model.

c. Why does God use both words, "image" and "likeness?"

> To avoid the implication that man is a precise copy of God, albeit in miniature, the less specific and more abstract word "demuth" ("likeness") was added by God. "Demuth" then defines and limits the meaning of "tselem" (Humbert, Barr, T.W.O.T. Vol. 1, p. 192).

d. Man bears the image of God in three senses:

1) Man is like God in that he is a person (with personality). A "person" is a being who possesses self-consciousness, self-determination, intellect, emotion, will, world-consciousness, etc.
2) Man is like God in that he has a spirit (Jn. 4:24; I Cor. 6:20; cp. Eph. 4:23-24).
3) Man is like God in that he has a moral nature (a basic, innate comprehension of right and wrong - Rom. 2:14; Eccl. 7:29).

> When Adam sinned the image of God in man was marred and defiled but was not obliterated.
> *Since mankind still retains this sense of the image of God, his life has a dignity and is to be respected, honored, and protected. Doing so honors the Creator (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9).

2. Every person has a soul-spirit which is of more value than all the wealth of the world (Mt. 16:26; Mk. 8:36, 37).

Improper definition of man:
"Man is a body who has a soul/spirit"
Accurate definition of man:
"Man is a soul/spirit who has a body"

The SOUL

Hebrew - נפש ("nephesh")

Greek - ψυχη ("psuche")

The "soul" is the immaterial aspect of man that gives him life (Gen. 2:7 - "...Man became a living soul" ["nephesh"]).

The SPIRIT

Hebrew - חור ("ruach")
Greek - πνευμα ("pneuma")

NOTE: The words "ruach" and "pneuma" in certain contexts are translated wind or breath (cp. Jn. 3:8; Rev. 11:11) because there is a parallel between the spirit and the wind or breath. "The spirit, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial, and powerful" (Vine, Expository Dictionary).

The "spirit" is the immaterial aspect of man that gives him a capacity to know and enjoy God.

3. Every person's soul will live on for eternity

a. The souls of the saved are with the Lord (Gen.35:18; II Cor.5:8; Acts 7:59)

b. The souls of the lost are experiencing eternal anguish & suffering (Mt. 10:28; Rev. 14:11; 20:14,15)

Racism over skin color is foolish because a "soul" has no color and the soul/spirit is the essence of a man!

III. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF SOCIAL SUPREMACY

(God's people must respect a man's principle over his popularity)

(Key Text: I Cor. 1:24-31)

***Don't glory in your fame and notoriety (Beware of social pride)**

Continuing with the intention to deflate the Corinthians' vain pride and to humble those who glory in men, Paul shows the type of people God saves and uses for His glory.

God not only has a message the unsaved, perishing world regards as *"foolish"* (v. 18, 21, 23, 25), but He also has messengers they mighty view as foolish.

God not only has a gospel the godless, unconverted, lost, pagan world would disregard, but He has a people that often don't add up to much in the world's estimation.

God is not desperately "looking for millionaires or famous athletes or entertainers or statesmen" as if He needed their money, fame, fortune, or talent to get His work done!

The Lord specializes in converting simple folk, common people, the under-privileged, the down-and-outers, the project kids, and other looked-down-upon groups.

* *God can take someone the world views as a "nobody" and make a somebody out of him! ... He can take something the world views as "nothing" and make something out of it!*

Why?

God mightily transforms "nobodies" and "nothings"...

1. To display His wisdom & power (v.24-26)
2. To shame the wisdom of this world (v.27-28)
3. To strip man of his proud boasting (v.29)
4. To glorify His Son -- Jesus Christ (v.30)
5. To fulfill His Word (v.31)

"Thus saith the Lord,
Let not the wise man
glory in his wisdom,
neither let the mighty man
glory in his might,
let not the rich man
glory in his riches:

But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."
(Jeremiah 9:23-24)

IV. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF <u>CULTURAL</u> SUPREMACY

(God's people must honor <u>character</u> and <u>conduct</u> over <u>culture</u> and <u>custom</u>)
(Key Text: I Cor. 9:19-23)

***Don't glory in your <u>ways</u> of doing things (Beware of <u>cultural</u> pride)**

Paul, rather than forcing the Gentiles to embrace His Jewish culture and customs, made personal sacrifices and adjustments to spread the Gospel inside of the culture he ministered to without doctrinal or moral compromise.

Paul chose to <u>adjust</u> his <u>methodologies</u> so that he would reach more people, without compromising his message or Biblical convictions (v.19-23)

V. 19
"Free from all men" - Although Paul did <u>not</u> have to live to suit anyone's customs, cultural practices, or mannerisms, he freely chose to serve them by adapting to their non-moral distinctions so as to win them for Christ.

V. 20
--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the <u>Jew</u> to win them

V. 21
--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the <u>Gentile</u> to win them

V. 22
--Paul adapted his lifestyle to the <u>weak</u> to win them

"I am made all things to all men" **-** This does <u>not</u> involve Biblical compromise on doctrine, dogma, or clearly-defined moral issues.

It does involve adjustments in technique, methodology, and custom for the Gospel's sake.

What does it mean to *"be all things to all men"*? It means:

1. A willingness to <u>allow for differences</u> (not everyone has to "do Christianity" just like an American; how willing are you to accommodate the differences of others without ignoring or violating God's moral law?)

2. A willingness to bend on non-moral issues (compromise on preferences, never on principles)

3. A willingness to adjust your ways of doing things so that you can conform to the culture you are ministering in, without Biblical compromise (be flexible).

4. A willingness to be open to new methodologies

Our authority is "sola scriptura," not any man's culture.

The Bible shows no ethnically pure "correct" culture.

V. SHATTER THE BARRIER OF ECONOMIC SUPREMACY

(God's people must value a person's worth over his wealth)

(Key Text: James 2:1-13)

***Don't glory in your status (Beware of material pride)**

"So, what do you do for a living?" The question is often asked. And then a judgment is made about the individual based on his answer.

First time impressions are rarely correct.

"Respect of persons" = lit. to "receive the face"; to show partiality, personal favoritism.
"Respect of persons" = a biased judgment, based on external appearances or circumstances such as race, wealth, social rank, or popularity while not looking at the person's internal true worth (value).
"Respect of persons" - to judge people superficially rather than on the basis of their true worth in God's sight.

YOU MUST NOT HAVE PARTIALITY! (v. 1)
Why not? 4 Reasons:

1. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU HAVE A WRONG VALUE SYSTEM** (v. 2-4)

V. 4 - "Judges" - you need to judge a person's worth as God judges it (He is an immortal soul, created in the image of God).
"Evil thoughts" Sinful motives. Can this happen in a Church today? Yes!
When special attention is given to the rich in hopes that they will give money liberally.
Social and economic distinctions should be wiped out by the Gospel.
In the early church, there must have been a sense of awkwardness when the master would sit next to his slave; or if the slave led the service in which his master was but a member of the congregation. We have a tendency to cater to the rich because we hope to get

something out of them, and to avoid the poor because they embarrass us.

2. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU ARE INCONSISTENT** (v. 5-7)

a. THEOLOGICALLY - Inconsistent with the method of God (v.5-6a)
   1) Those you reject, God selects (v. 5).
   2) Those you reject, you dishonor (v. 6a).

b. LOGICALLY - inconsistent with practice of the rich.
   1) Those you favor, oppress you (v. 6b).
   2) Those you favor, dishonor God (v. 7)

3. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU BREAK THE ROYAL LAW OF LOVE** (V. 8-11).

4. BECAUSE WHEN YOU ARE PARTIAL, **YOU ARE GUILTY OF HYPOCRISY** (v. 12-13).

Your practice (treatment of others) must be consistent with how Christ treated you. Did he show special favor to you because of any wealth, gifts, abilities, etc. that you had? -- NO!

Application to Soul-winning -
Ask yourself:

1) Am I as interested in the salvation of a poor man as one who is rich?
2) Am I willing to put as much effort into the winning of one who is uncultured as one who is educated?
3) Am I more excited when a person gets saved who is talented, gifted (a potential leader) as when one with limited gifts gets saved? (Look at their potential! - What God can make them)

Conclusion:

Basically, what is needed for your church to overthrow its prejudice is:

1. A right view of self and others
   (A Biblical anthropology)
2. A right view of God
   (A Biblical theology)
3. A right view of salvation

(A Biblical soteriology)

**Needed: A Right Theology

In God's eyes, all lines of distinction, all supposed marks of superiority are non-existent.
"For there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:11).
Jesus did not show partiality. Even His enemies admitted: *"Master, we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men."* (Matt. 22:16b)

a. God shows no partiality in judging men
(Rom. 2:9-11)
b. God shows no partiality in describing men (Rom. 3:9-23)

**Needed: A Right Soteriology

God shows no partiality in saving men (Rom. 3:24-31).
(Gal. 3:26-28)

All races are accepted by God and saved on an equal level (Gal. 3:26-28).

Do you view yourself as a debtor to all people (indebted to reach all with the Gospel)? (Rom. 1:14)
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