

## Prejudice to Love

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Joseph Carty / General

Acts / Samaria (city); Ethiopic Enoch / Acts 8; Acts 8:22–23

The Samaritan people were the most hated group by Jews. It was practically a curse word to call someone a Samaritan. Yet, amazingly, the disciples changed heart and ended up converting many Samaritans to Christianity.

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For centuries people believed that Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to earth. Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker of all time, and surely he would not be wrong.

Truth - heavier item would strike with more force.

Error - heavier item would not actually move faster.

Anyone, of course, could have taken two objects, one heavy and one light, and dropped them from a great height to see whether or not the heavier object landed first. But no one did until nearly 2,000 years after Aristotle's death. In 1589 Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Then he went to the top and pushed off a ten-pound and a one-pound weight. Both landed at the same instant. The power of belief was so strong, however, that the professors denied their eyesight. They continued to say Aristotle was right.

- Today we discuss,
  - overcoming prejudice.

Prejudice - an opinion or belief, whether conscious or unconscious, that is not based completely on fact.

- Each human being
  - has been taught
    - from early age
      - to develop certain
        - opinion about
          - world around them.
  
- These opinions and belief
  - often based on
    - certain experiences
      - carried to generalizations.
  
- We can pre-judge
  - many things in life.
  
- Most common

- most controversial
  - racial prejudice.
- Today,
  - we discuss the issue
    - of racial prejudice
      - among believers
        - in the NT.

## History of Israelite Racism

- For many Jews
  - their history naturally
    - developed bias.
- God called
  - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
    - Fathers of great nation.

- God made covenant with
  - a national group.
  
- Because of the influence
  - idolatry and immorality
    - God told his people
      - minimize time spent
        - with other national groups.
  
- They were afforded
  - special privileges.
  
- Not to mingle much
  - with those outside covenant.
  
- Natural bias developed
  - very conscious bias
    - Jesus time.
      - Jews are better.

- Jews are blessed
  - others are not.
- Jews are good
  - others are not.
- They forgot
  - greater mission:

**Isaiah 49:6 ESV**

he says:

“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant

to raise up the tribes of Jacob

and to bring back the preserved of Israel;

I will make you as a light for the nations,

that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

- Part of
  - original promise
    - to Abraham was:

**Genesis 22:18 ESV**

and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

## The New Testament

- Fast forward now
  - to the New Testament.
- Racism and nationalism
  - is rampant in Israel.
- Conquered by other nation.
  - Taxed
  - Persecuted
  - Abused
    - By Romans
- Their entire philosophy

- of a coming Messiah
  - wrapped in their
    - racial prejudice
    - theological bias
      - confused nationalism.
- Their belief
  - Messiah is coming.
    - to overthrow Romans.
    - to establish Israel
    - conquer nations
    - Make Israel Great Again

## MIGA - Make Israel Great Again

- Virtually all Israelite
  - were racist
    - and believed
      - it was a positive virtue.

- and spiritual value.
- Satan knew
  - he could divide
  - and destroy
  - mission of God
    - through racism.
- It has been
  - one of his greatest tools.

## Division in Unity

- Of all moments in time
  - when the people of God
    - where most united
      - shortly after Pentecost.

- Christians
  - selling property
  - living in commune
  - sacrificing for each other.
  
- In moment of
  - greatest unity
    - world has seen
      - Satan goes back
        - to favorite tool.

**Acts 6:1 ESV**

Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

- Today,
  - we may be discouraged
    - by prejudice around us.

- Let us remember,
  - should be addressed
  - effort to change
  - addressed directly.
  
- Yet in this life
  - may not
    - ever fully experience
      - life without prejudice.
  
- That being said,
  - Issue in NT church
    - God was constantly
      - growing his people.
      - Story today...

## The Back Story

- Previous Sermons

- stoning of Stephen
- persecution lead by Saul
- people flee for life

**Acts 8:4 ESV**

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

- They went everywhere.
- Previously huddled in
  - their groups
    - people like them.
- God allowed persecution.
  - force Christians
    - take gospel to world.

**Acts 8:5 ESV**

Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.

- Samaria?
- Samaria?
  - of all places
    - why Samaria.
- Let's be honest.
  - they wouldn't go there
    - unless forced.
- They hated Samaritans.
  - No persecution
  - No evangelization.
- Remember,
  - if you ever experience
    - hardship in your life.
      - maybe God allowed it.
        - for reason that

- you don't understand.

## History of Hatred

- Long history of hatred
  - between Jews
    - and Samaritans
- 10 Northern Tribes
  - Mixed
    - ethnically
    - spiritually
- After Babylonian Captivity
  - Rebuilding of Temple
    - Samaritans to help
      - Jews said no.
      - Samaritans hated.

# A Curse Word

I used to curse a lot

took while to stop

punch me...

- People use lots of words
  - as curse words.
- In Jesus time,
  - calling someone a
    - Samaritan was
      - like curse word.
        - Greatly offensive.

Romanian Gypsy

Adjective form

“The way you are dress is very gypsy.”

- Jesus get in verbal fight
  - with the Pharisees:
- Jesus tells Pharisees
  - they are slaves to sin
  - and error
- They claim to be free:

**John 8:33 ESV**

They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free’?”

- Jesus says,
  - “you are not Abraham’s kids.”
  - “you have different father.”

They attack Jesus:

**John 8:41 ESV**

You are doing the works your father did.” They said to him, “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God.”

- They know that Mary
  - was pregnant when
    - they were unmarried.
- They accuse Jesus' parents
  - of sexual sin.
- A curse word
  - “bastard”
- Jesus counters:

**John 8:44 ESV**

You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

- Ouch...
  - tough words.
- Jesus called them
  - children of Satan...

- Some say Jesus was
  - always gentle.
- Not exactly.
  - he was blunt
    - when needed.
- Jewish leaders
  - try to find a curse word
    - to throw at Him.

**John 8:48 ESV**

The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”

- Greatest attack ->
  - you are a Samaritan.
- That is a fighting word.

Romanian Gypsy

- This depicts how hated
  - the Samaritans were.
- There was no thought
  - to evangelize them.
  - they were lost.
  - period!

## Parable of Good Samaritan

- You know the story.
  - Jesus makes
    - the Samaritan the hero.
- You can only imagine.
  - grated on Jews nerves.

- End of parable Jesus asks

**Luke 10:36 ESV**

Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?”

- The lawyer can't answer.
  - doesn't want it to be true.
  - Samaritan the hero?
  - the righteous?
    - Priest and Levite wrong!
- He can't get word out.
  - Can't say
    - Samaritan is righteous.

[Luke 10:37](#) (ESV)

He said, “The one who showed him mercy...”

- He worded it like that
  - because he refused to say.

- Samaritan was righteous.
- It goes against everything
  - they have been taught
  - and believe.
- Jesus was a radical teacher.
  - He wouldn't teach
    - their bigotry
    - or racism.

In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi wrote that during his student days he read the Gospels seriously and considered converting to Christianity. He believed that in the teachings of Jesus he could find the solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India.

So one Sunday he decided to attend services at a nearby church and talk to the minister about becoming a Christian. When he entered the sanctuary, however, the usher refused to give him a seat and suggested that he go worship with his own people. Gandhi left the church and never returned. "If Christians have caste differences also," he said, "I might as well remain a Hindu." That usher's prejudice not only betrayed Jesus but also turned a person away from trusting Him as Savior.

› [USA Today](#)

- › Don't understand.
- › Somehow race issues
  - › still a thing.
- Let's be clear.
  - Racial Issues
    - Are against Christ's Teaching
- To a degree or other
  - we all struggle with some
    - unconscious bias

Fictitious resumes with White-sounding names sent to help-wanted ads were more likely to receive callbacks for interviews compared to resumes with African-American sounding names. Resumes with White-sounding names received 50% more callbacks for interviews (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004).

- We want to believe
  - that is others
    - not me.

- We all have forms of
  - unconscious bias.
- Racial Issues everywhere.
  - California - Mexicans
  - Nebraska - Native Americans
  - South - Black v. Whites
  - Albania - Gypsies
  - My ancestors - Irish

Romanian Gypsies

Raluca

Germans are gypsies

- In our area
  - strong push
    - make racial issues political
    - Black Lives Matter

- George Floyd
- Etc.
  
- Polarization
  - Mixing of ideas
    - often contradictory
  
- Peaceful Protest
  - blended with violent protest
  
- Confusing!
  
- Racism
  
- Jesus never wanted this.
  - work of Satan to divide.
  
- And its not new.
  - Satan's method
    - from centuries ago.

Two apples up in a tree were looking down on the world. The first apple said, "Look at all those people fighting, robbing, rioting -- no one seems willing to get along with his fellow man. Someday we apples will be the only ones left. Then we'll rule the world."

Replied the second apple, "Which of us -- the reds or the greens?"

- Important Point ->
  - Many Jewish Christians
    - overcame their racism!
- Their racism was deep.
  - If they could overcome
    - we can too!
- Even the unknown
  - Unconscious Bias

*"Given half a chance, people often crawl out of the boxes into which we've relegated them."*

- Let's learn from
  - Their story.

## Great Commission

### **Acts 1:8 ESV**

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- When disciples heard this.
  - I'm sure they were
    - very surprised.
- They didn't consider
  - Samaritans
    - salvation material
      - simply lost.
- Jesus' previous directions were:

### **Matthew 10:5-6 NKJV**

These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

- After cross
  - marching orders change...
  - Disciples not ready for it...
- After persecution
  - they flee for lives.
- Great place to hide
  - nearby
    - Samaria.
    -

#### **Acts of the Apostles Chapter 11—The Gospel in Samaria**

And when His disciples were driven from Jerusalem, some found in Samaria a safe asylum. The Samaritans welcomed these messengers of the gospel, and the Jewish converts gathered a precious harvest from among those who had once been their bitterest enemies.

- Bitterest enemies...
  - you may not have any.
    - but imagine you did.
      - wars between group.
        - fights
        - death
        - hatred.
- Imagine being
  - first missionary...
    - tough job.
- Jesus was first missionary

## Woman at the Well

- Not tell full story
  - result was amazing.

- Jesus broke through
  - the prejudice.

**John 4:39-41 NKJV**

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all that I ever did.” So when the Samaritans had come to Him, they urged Him to stay with them; and He stayed there two days. And many more believed because of His own word.

- Broke prejudice
  - paved way.
- Prejudice still there
  - in hearts of disciples .
- This fact is clear
  - in next story.
- Near end of
  - Jesus ministry.
- 3 1/2 years with disciples.
  - tried to change

- prejudiced hearts...

## Calling Fire Down

### **Luke 9:51-54 ESV**

When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make preparations for him. But the people did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, “Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”

- Hospitality
  - sacred honor.
- To deny
  - great offense.
- James and John
  - felt their job,
    - defend honor of master.
- Remembered story of Elijah

### **2 Kings 1:10 NKJV**

So Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, “If I *am* a man of God, then let

fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

- Jesus is appalled

**Luke 9:55–56 NKJV**

But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save *them*.” And they went to another village.

- James and John
  - would not have asked this
    - if it were Jews.
- In their mind
  - Samaritans deserve fire.
    - Fire and Brimstone.
- Disciples are stuck
  - in old way of thinking
    - even after

- years with Jesus.
- So...
  - what changed?
  - how did they
    - let it go?
- Bible doesn't fully explain.

## Mission to Samaria

### **Acts 8:4-8 ESV**

Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice, came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.

- Great success
  - many conversions.
  - Disciples changed.

- We would like to believe
  - At Pentecost
    - everything change.
      - No more
        - racism
        - unconscious bias.
- Unfortunately,
  - just not really true.
    - (mentioned earlier)
    - (racism in unity)
    - (commune)

## What Changed?

- Firstly,
  - persecution forced them
    - to mingle with
      - gentiles

- otherwise avoided.
  
- Some were able
  - move past
    - trained racism of past.
  
- Others took long time.
  - Decades pass
    - still trying to figure out
      - circumcision.
  
- Some don't believe
  - Gentiles can be saved.
  - Most believe can be saved.
    - argue about
      - require circumcision...
  
- Jerusalem Council
  - [Acts 15](#) - church votes

- Paul tells story
  - in Galatians
    - how difficult it was
      - for many Jews.

**Galatians 2:11-14 ESV**

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

- Many years after cross
  - still trying to understand
    - Ceremonial law
    - what applies
- How does God
  - relate to other people groups

- what position Israel has
  - in the NT.
  
- It took years
  - to work through issues
    - as whole church.
  
- I pray for us.
  - to work though it

General Robert E. Lee was a devout follower of Jesus Christ. It is said that soon after the end of the American Civil War, he visited a church in Washington, D.C. During the communion service he knelt beside a black man. An onlooker said to him later, "How could you do that?" Lee replied, "My friend, all ground is level beneath the cross."

- Thankfully,
- we are somewhat past
  - practice of slavery
    - still have
      - aggressive race riots.

- 1960's gone.
- Sadly,
  - decades later,
    - still residual issues.
- How did disciples overcome?
  - Service.
  - Mission work.

## Appeal

- Let's work through issues.
  - talk openly.
    - spend time
      - cross-culturally.
- Clicks at church
  - Push out of clicks

- Most important
  - Serve
  - Serve
  - Serve