



Message Transcript

The Problems of Prejudice

Jeff Schwarzentraub

Pastor Jeff (00:00):

Our Father in Heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise for who you are. And Lord, we do thank you as a body of people that believe that you're still on the throne, that you're still ruling righteously. And Lord, even when we see the things that we see in the news, we thank you that we can come pray to you. And Lord, as a congregation today, as we've sought your favor for Israel, we just continue to ask you to bless that nation. We continue to ask you to drive out evil. We continue to ask you to be with each and every individual situation for your glory, and that you would restore the heart of Israel to yourself, you'd return them to you. Father, we bless you and praise you that we even, as we read your word these days, we watch it unfolding right before our eyes.

(00:38)

And so now Lord, as we're ready to hear your living and active word, we believe as a people that every time your word is faithfully and accurately proclaimed, that you speak. And so our prayer this morning is, "Speak, Lord, for we are ready to hear." And so now, for all those who have gathered here today, who desire to hear the Lord speak directly to you, who will believe what he tells you and who will put into practice what he shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word "amen"?

Congregation (01:04):

Amen.

Pastor Jeff (01:05):

Amen. There's nothing more miraculous than seeing someone come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. For those of you that are believers in Christ who have repented of your sin and trusted that Jesus shed blood on the cross, his burial and his resurrection from the dead has given you new life. You'll remember exactly what it was like the moment he came into your life. You'll realize his changes that he started making and the joy that was unspeakable, knowing that your entire debt's been forgiven for all eternity, and the God of the universe in dwells you and wants to walk with you.

(01:34)

And yet we find that even after becoming a Christian, that God wants us to walk out what he's been working inside of us. And one of the things that he works inside of us is his very life in us. Christ in us, the hope of glory. And one of the challenges that we face as believers is that prior to our conversion, we lived our life in a certain way, with a certain particular prejudice or bias or understanding of how the world was to operate. And then when Jesus comes in, as I've said many times from this pulpit, he doesn't come in to just be resident. He comes in to be president.

(02:08)

He comes in to take over the entirety of your heart and your life so that you can live on mission, allowing Christ to do the work in and through you. And the challenge to this is that for so many converts, they falsely believe that, "Well, what I was before, I'll just bring into this new relationship with God and he can deal with that." And what we

realize very quickly when we read the word is he convicts us of our sin. He convicts us of the things that need to change. And he says, "That may be how you operated independently of me until you met me, but now I'm in charge. And this is who you are. You have a new identity, you've been given a new name as saint, and there's a new way of operating that you can't operate like you were before."

(02:50)

And so as we've been going through this book of James, he's been telling us as new believers in Christ how it is we can walk our talk, what we need to work out. And we took a look at how God authors trials in our life and what a blessing they are, because they grow us in our strength and dependence upon the Lord. We took a look at temptation that God allows in our life so that we can find the pathway God wants and so we can walk his way. We took a look at how we are to receive the word of God, and how we're not just to put it away, but when we own it, we put it into practice like God shows us. And we don't just look at it as in a mirror and then pass by and forget, but we receive the word and we go do something with it.

(03:27)

And then last week, we took a look at "Here's how you know that you're doing those things." Here's how you know that you're really in the faith and that you're walking your walk, by taming your tongue and helping the helpless and withdrawing from worldliness. And James is going to continue his pathway for us as we continue to grow. And today we're going to talk about the problem with prejudice. We're going to

talk about the problem of prejudice.

(03:51)

Now, you have the same look that the first group had it on their face, which is "That doesn't apply to me. That's for somebody else. I'm a Christian. I'm not prejudiced." So I'm going to allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart today. I'm going to ask you, will you allow the Holy Spirit to do that? Because whether you realize it or not, when you came into faith with Jesus, you brought with you biases, preferences, and prejudices that, unless the Holy Spirit takes away, are still there.

(04:14)

And so to take a look at this problem today, we're going to be in James 2:1-13. James 2:1-13. And while you're turning there, let me just set this up. Because Jesus wants us to understand that the main problem is that we need to have relationship with one another, and prejudice is what divides those relationships. Jesus said on the night he was betrayed in John 17, "I pray that they would all be one, I in them and you in me. May they have complete or perfect unity so that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them."

(04:49)

How does God want his message to be sent out? How does God want the church to live on mission? When we're unified, when we're together, it doesn't mean we think the same on every issue. It means that we love each other radically the same.

(05:05)

And one of the things that kills that is our own personal prejudices or our own personal biases. And this is what James, through the power of the Holy Spirit, is going to express to us today. Notice what he says. He says, "My brethren," which I love about James because this is one of the most hard-hitting books of the New Testament, and he's always talking in the context of family. He's always talking about "Brothers and sisters, I love you. I love you enough to tell you this truth."

(05:28)

"My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with an attitude of personal favoritism." And there it is. He talks about Jesus as the Lord Jesus Christ, not just the one who saved you, not just the one who became flesh. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who is ruling and reigning, after his death on the cross, burial in the grave, his resurrection from the dead. 50 more days on the earth, he ascended into heaven where he's been all along. He's still alive as he's ever been, and that is why he's giving these instructions.

(06:06)

Jesus wants the church to know, Jesus wants you to know, that you can't have faith in him and show personal favoritism to certain people. You can't have biases and preferences towards certain people. You can't treat certain people one way and certain people another way. And here's why. Here's why. Because God created everybody.

(06:27)

In Genesis 1, after God walks through each day, what he creates on day six, the crown of his whole creation is he created man in his own image. In the image of God, he created them. Male and female, he created them. God understands that the crown of his creation is humankind. You need to understand that too. And sometimes we forget. I just got a picture this morning of a friend who's up in the mountains. He took a picture, sent it to me this morning, said, "Hey, praying for you."

(06:56)

But you ever get those pictures from your friends? It's almost like, "Bet you wish you were here but you're not. So let me show you what I'm looking at." And it can be of the ocean or it can be of the mountains or it can be some incredible event. It's usually something in nature. It can be the stars, the sun. "Man, look at this. I'm looking at this, and look at this. It's incredible." But if we really understood how God sees the world, when God sees a picture of a person, he would say, "Wow, that one's created in my image. That one was destined with purpose. That's the crown of my creation. I'm in awe of that."

(07:29)

That's why, even as a pastor, I've done funerals for people that aren't believers that I know met Christ and heard the unfortunate words "Depart from me, you worker of iniquity. I've never known you." I've officiated funerals of people that even the wife that weren't very happy with them or the kids or whatever, but there's always something good I can say, because there's intrinsic value in every single human being

that lives, because they were created in the image of God. And that's what we need to understand, amen?

(07:57)

Psalm 139 tells us that every single person is fearfully and wonderfully made. There may be a surprise to Mom and Dad sometimes, but there are no accidents or surprises to God. He knew exactly when you were going to be born. He knew the exact amount of days. He knows the exact day you're going to meet him face to face. Every single human being has intrinsic worth and value. And James is saying that because he's the Lord Jesus Christ, you can't have prejudices or personal biases towards anybody ever.

(08:26)

Why? Because when it comes to loving others, number one, prejudice is our sin. Prejudice is our sin. It's my sin, and I'm going to be real candid with you, it's your sin too. One of the reasons that you have a hard time loving everybody the way Jesus loves them is your own prejudice. So allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you this morning.

(08:46)

He gives an extreme example here. Notice what he says. He says, "For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, there also comes a poor man dressed in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing fine clothes and say 'You sit here in a good place,' and you say to the poor man, 'You stand over there or sit down by my footstool.' Have you not made

distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil motives?"

(09:13)

He gives an extreme example. He says, "Suppose you have a church gathering. Somebody comes in, you notice they got gold rings, they're dressed to the nines, they're looking fine. You can tell that this person has means. And they say, 'Where can I sit?' 'Wherever you want to sit, you can sit here, you can sit there. We'll give you a front-row seat. Matter of fact, you can go sit right by our pastor. You can sit right up front, want to make sure you have a best seat.'"

(09:35)

And somebody else comes in with filthy clothes, dirty clothes. Doesn't mean they just haven't been washed. It means they're tattered, they can't afford them. And you see this person, they're a poor person, and they say, "Where can I sit?" "Well, you can't sit, but you can go stand over there in the corner if you want. I mean, if you watch the surface, that's fine. Or if you want to, maybe you can sit on the floor. Because I want people to know that I'm not associating with you. I want them to know that if you're sitting anywhere next to me, you're not sitting in a seat, you're sitting on the floor. I'm making you a little less than everybody else."

(10:07)

And what is God's judgment on that? What does he say about when we treat people like that? Here's what he says in verse 4. "Have you not made distinctions among yourself and become judges with evil motives?" What's he saying? He's saying

that in the heart of the man and heart of a woman untamed by the Holy Spirit, you have prejudices in your life. And we have prejudices all over the place. We have prejudices towards genetic attributes, don't we? These are things that cannot be controlled.

(10:35)

They were what you were given such as your color of skin, your ethnicity, where you're from, your appearance, your height, your weight, your gender, your family. I mean, there's a lot of things you just can't control. I can't control my skin color. You can't control yours. I can't control my hair growth. You can't control yours. There are certain things we just don't have any control over.

(10:57)

And isn't it interesting that sometimes the unredeemed self, the one that hasn't been empowered by the Holy Spirit, begins to make judgments just when we look at someone? And it goes off in our heart, and we start sizing them up and our brain starts going through all of our background of data. And when we see somebody, we start categorizing them and say, "They probably fit right here." And then we make judgments. Now, James is using an extreme example, but I can tell you this, that sometimes in churches, church can be a place of exceptional division, where people only hang out with certain kinds of people, right?

(11:31)

It's not too far removed where if you didn't have white skin, you sat in a different section in the church. Pathetic, right? But that's what he's talking about. That's what

he's addressing. He's like, "Don't show favoritism based upon genetic appearances and what people are. Don't start making your judgements that way." And if you don't, then there's other ways that you make them.

(11:54)

You can make value judgments based upon cultural influence. Cultural influence. Where you look at somebody and you're starting to ask the question, "I wonder how they can benefit me. I wonder how I can benefit from helping them. Is there going to be some benefit here? Because if that person has influence, if that person's important in the culture, if that person's wealthy, if that person has means, if that person has significance and I come alongside of them, then guess what? I'm going to have some significance too." And we start sizing people up that way.

(12:27)

And then what about personal preferences? This is where it may hit a little closer to home. Every single human being starts making choices in their life. Some choices we make are good, some choices we make are bad. Some choices are aligned with the word of God and some choices are not. And what about people that make choices based upon what political party they're going to affiliate with, what sports teams they're going to root for, what their response to God is going to be, where they're going to attend school, what their vocation's going to be, how they're going to run their family.

(12:57)

And we have this intricate grid with all these things, and I'm not being exhaustive here, in our heart where we start sizing people up and we start asking the question, "Is this person valuable? Can this person be a benefit to me? Can I be a benefit to them? Or is there a way we're going to mutually love each other?" And if I'm answering negative on all those, then I can do whatever I want, move them to the side.

(13:22)

Or how about this? "I'm not prejudiced, but I just ignore people like that." That's not the love of Christ. That's not what he did. That's not who he is. Why? Because prejudice is our sin. And the reason we have a hard time loving other people, it's not something external, it's something internal, and it's not in the other person. It's in you and it's in me. And that's what the Holy Spirit is trying to address. He says, "The reason you don't love all people well, it's not the other person. In spite of who they are and the difficulties they have and the challenging person they are to be around, it doesn't mean that you're unable to love them," Jesus says, "because I can love them. And if you're my disciple, then you should love them too."

(14:02)

It means we treat all people impartially. It means we treat them fairly, justly, equitably. That's what he tells us to do. And this is why it's so important, because whether you realize it or not, it's there. I remember when I was 24 years old, I was training for ministry. I was in this seven-week program, and part of what I was trained to be was a youth pastor in the church. And one of the things they had us do was they

trained us in how to build relationships. And they would send us out every night to go talk to people wherever we were in our sphere of influence so we could get to know them, we could find out about their goals, hopefully get to share the gospel, all these things.

(14:34)

And there was accountability the next day when you came back to class, like, "Hey, who did you meet last night? What did you find out about them?" All these kinds of things. And I remember I was in Minnesota and I went to a hockey game with some friends, and first period came, intermission, second period came, it was intermission. And I thought to myself, "If I don't go meet somebody now, I'm not going to have time to do it later, and I don't want to show up to class saying I haven't met anybody."

(14:55)

So I start looking around like, "Who am I going to talk to?" Well, wouldn't you know it, there's a guy standing right next to me. Guy was standing right next to me, had this huge full beard drinking a beer belly out to about here. And I'm like, "Okay, this is my guy." So I look over at him and I said, "Hey, what's your name?" He told me. He said, "What's your name?" I told him. We started to talk. I said, "Hey, what do you do for a living?" He goes, "I'm a bus driver." And I thought, "Of course you are." That was my thought. You see the pride coming up in me?

(15:25)

And I said, "Well, how long have you been doing that?" He said, "Six months." I

started thinking, "Of course it is, because you probably haven't had a job. Because you don't look like the kind of guy that would be working really hard. Because you don't look fit, and you're sitting here drinking a beer, talking about the hockey game." So I said, "Well, why have you only been doing that for six months?" He said, "Because I'm a pastor and I'm on sabbatical."

(15:51)

The conversation then changed. And I started asking him, "Well, where do you pastor?" And "What do you do?" And "Tell me why you're driving this bus." He said, "Because I love kids and I want to demonstrate the love of Christ to kids, and I know no better way than to be among them by being a bus driver. So I don't like driving a bus, but I love kids and I want them to see Christ in me." I was so filled with shame in that conversation that I went back and reported the next day, "What did you learn?" I'm like, "I learned how much pride and prejudice I have in my heart and how I size people up before I even meet them and how God needs to change that in me."

(16:25)

And from that day on, he started doing that.

Congregation (16:28):

Amen.

Pastor Jeff (16:29):

Amen? And I tell you that because without the help of the Holy Spirit, it's going to stay in you. But with the help of the Holy Spirit, I can tell you, he can give you love for

anybody, even people that think differently and act differently than you. And it doesn't mean you change your convictions. You don't have to change what you believe. You don't have to become somebody else. You can still hold fast to the truth while demonstrating love. Isn't that what Jesus did? I mean, who did he hang out with?

(17:00)

He hung out with all sorts of prideful, awful sinner people, like he had any other choice. That's all he had. Everybody he met was somebody who was rebelling against him. And what did he do? He showed genuine love to them. He didn't agree with their bad behavior. He didn't tell them it was good. A matter of fact, many times he was saying, "Go and sin no more." But what did he do? He demonstrated love.

(17:22)

See, sometimes we have pride and prejudice and we mask it with, "Well, I'm just living holy and I don't want to hang out with people like that." No, you're just living prideful because you don't really genuinely love that person, because nobody's asked you to change your convictions. This is what he's talking about. He's talking about prejudice. Prejudice, favoritism. It's inherent in each of us.

(17:44)

And notice what he says. He says in verse 5, he gives three different questions he asks. He goes, "Listen, my beloved brethren," he goes, "I'm telling you, did God not choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to those who love him?" Here's what he said. "God has a special heart for

the poor. Not just the poor in spirit, but the poor. People that can't help themselves. God cares about them. God loves them."

(18:08)

So if you're referencing the rich and you're putting aside the poor, are you not putting aside the ones that God really cares about the most? In your effort for your own pride and your own influence, you are going against the very thing God wants you to do, which is to what? Take care of the poor, serve the poor, help the poor, give to the poor. That's what he says. So in your efforts, in your prejudice, you miss out on who God cares about.

(18:36)

It's not that God doesn't love the rich. It's not that. There are righteous rich and unrighteous rich. There are righteous poor and unrighteous poor. But God does make it clear in his word how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. And before you're like, "Yeah, I know those people like that," he's talking about us, all of us. All of us are rich.

(18:55)

I've been in places in the world, in Third World countries where I've had to go through a project when I was in India stepping over raw sewage to get into a room that was about the size of 10 by 12 room with 50 kids sitting there waiting to hear me preach the gospel that had more joy on their face than any group of people I've ever seen. God loves the poor. He cares for the poor. He entrusts us to take care of the

poor.

(19:18)

So if we're saying, "Well, I'm only going to hang out with influencers that can influence people, because I want to be an influencer," you're missing out on the heart of God. Your bias misses out on God's heart, number one. Number two, he says this. He says, notice in verse 6, "But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court?" He says this: "People with means, people with resources, are the ones who oppress those that don't have any." The ones who don't have any resources, they can't stick up for themselves. So when you're preferencing someone that has all the resources, aren't they the ones that are causing a lot of the injustice in the society? So why are you preferencing them? Because when you preference them, you're missing out on God's heart.

(20:02)

And when you preference them, they're the very ones that are out in the world doing exact opposite of what God's telling you to do. Quit preferencing people based upon their outside appearance and start preferencing the people based upon God's heart. Amen? That's what he says.

(20:19)

And then he drives it home with his third question, and asks this: "Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called?" Now, fair means beautiful, it means wonderful. He says, "Is it not the rich? Is it not those that are self-sustaining? Is

it not those who have it all that blaspheme the name of Christ?" You say, "How's that play out?" Think about it. I've had a chance to preach literally all over the world, right? I've preached to rich people, I've preached to poor people.

(20:51)

Preaching in a prison is one of the easiest places to preach in the world, right? Preaching to poor people is one of the easiest tests, because they already know they're in need. You tell people in a prison they're sinners, they're like, "Got you. Go on to point number two." Is there any hope? You preach sin to a group that has it together, and here's what I hear. When people go out and share the gospel, it's tough to share with them. They think that they don't really need Christ. They don't need the crutch. They don't need religion like you need, because they have everything put together.

(21:22)

Every time somebody says, "I don't need Christ, I have everything. There's no need, blah, blah, blah," they're blaspheming the name of Jesus who came and died on the cross because you did need him and you do need him. And if you don't repent and take him, you're going to know that for all eternity. So this is what he's saying, and it hits home in our heart because all of us have different levels of prejudice.

(21:45)

Some of us have prejudice towards socioeconomic classes. Some of us have prejudices towards skin color. Some of us have prejudice towards political parties.

Some of us have prejudice towards whatever it is. And when we see somebody in a category, we start grouping them. We make universal statements about that group. And anytime you make universal statements about a group, you're universally wrong every time. "All white people are..." You're wrong. "All black people are..." You're wrong. "All Asian people are..." You're wrong. "All rich people are..." You're wrong. "All poor people are..." You're wrong. "All people that go to BRAVE are..." I know you're wrong.

(22:23)

Because God's working on individuals, even within a group. And it doesn't mean when you befriend someone that you become like them. Jesus pejoratively was called "the friend of sinners". It didn't mean he appreciated their sin or became like them or told them, "Oh, it's okay," but it meant that he genuinely showed love to them. Tax collectors, prostitutes. You think about our culture today, who would Jesus hang around?

(22:49)

Well, yeah, he'd be part of the LGBTQ community, but not going there and befriending them for the next 15 years and saying, "Hey, it's cool that you do this." He would say, "No. There's two genders, they're male and female, and what you're doing is sinful. And I love you enough to tell you, and I'm willing to hang out with you." You can be truthful and loving at the same time. That's what James is teaching.

(23:09)

But what are we known for? One of the reasons I love pastoring at BRAVE Church, I know we have homeless people that are listening to me today, and I know I have millionaires that are listening to me today, and I love it. Because my job is not... I don't care where you're from. My job is to present the word to you and let the Holy Spirit speak to your life. Amen? He can be the judge. He can help us in this.

(23:25)

But all of us, without allowing the spirit to look in our life will have some prejudice there, and that's where we're asking, "Search me and try me, oh Lord. Search me and try me. Is there any area in my life where I show favoritism to somebody over somebody else or I preference them or not them because of what you've done in me?" And one of the ways and reasons that that you're saved is when this begins to dissipate.

(23:48)

I remember after I got saved... I got saved when I was 18 years old and I went off to college and I started hanging out with some people I would've never hung out with before because they loved Jesus. And I remember thinking one time, I'm like, "I'm hanging out with this dude. I would've thought he was a nerd. I'm hanging out with this dude." But why? Because I love them. And even people that were hostile. You know what Jesus says about hostile people? Love them. Pray for those who persecute you. "But they're saying all sorts of mean things." Well, you demonstrate Christ's love when you pray for them. You demonstrate Christ's love when you love them. That's okay.

(24:23)

And your reward in Heaven will be great for doing that, because now you're modeling Jesus. See, it's one thing to teach doctrine and truth, which I obviously think is important, or I wouldn't do what I'm doing for a living and having all sorts of knowledge, because that tells us who God is. But all your non-Christian friends out there, they're not reading this book asking who God is. They're looking at you to see who God is. They're reading you. Are you loving? Are you kind?

(24:51)

And my experience is, from the non-Christians I meet, they're not too quick to say, "Oh, you're a Christian. Oh my gosh, you guys are the most loving people in the world. I feel so accepted by you." Why is that? Because we quickly march to judgment rather than show the love of Christ. And that's what James is saying. If you're going to walk your talk, don't change your conviction. God is holy. You live your convictions. Don't stop speaking about your convictions, say your convictions. But don't dare go after an individual and make them feel bad, because Christ died for them. Christ created them, and Christ loves them. Amen?

(25:25)

Our problem in loving other people is us. It's our own prejudice. Our prejudice is our sin. Now, if that's our sin, then what do we need to do? What's the solution? And it's simple. Christ is our example. Christ is our example. Notice verse 8. He says, "If however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the scripture, you should love

your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well."

(25:51)

Now, you remember the royal law. Jesus spelled it out in more detail in Matthew 22:37 and following. He said, "Here's how you can sum up the whole law. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself." You get that "as yourself" part? Love your neighbor in the same way you'd want to be loved. Treat them the same way you would want to be treated. Show generosity to them with the same measure of generosity you'd want. Show kindness to them with the same measure of kindness you'd want. Show urgency with them, with the same kind of urgency you want. You love them in the same way you love yourself, right?

(26:27)

Why are both parts of that equation important? Because if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, but you don't love your neighbor as yourself, you're not living on mission for Jesus Christ. You're not the example God wants you to be. So we're called to love each other. And how do we know how to love each other? Well, Jesus is our example, amen? Jesus is the one who showed us.

(26:47)

Notice what he says in verse 10. He said, "But if you show partiality, that's preferential treatment. That's personal favoritism, that's bias, that's prejudice. If you show partiality, you are committing sin, and you are convicted by the law as

transgressors." He's saying this: If you're biased in your heart, you're breaking God's law. You're not living out the commandments that God requires. "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at one point has become guilty of all."

(27:16)

Now, this is a theological truth when it comes to the Bible, that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. It doesn't matter what it was. If it was a little white lie or it was sexual addiction, you've sinned. You've fallen short of God's glory. You're in need of his grace for repentance. You're in need of Christ. It doesn't matter how little, how big. But notice where this is situated. Notice what he's talking about. The command is "Go love other people in the same way that you yourself would want to be loved. If you're keeping all the other commandments and doing all the other things, but you don't love your neighbor as yourself, you're a lawbreaker. You're not obeying Christ's commands."

(27:56)

How many people think they're just obeying the law of God because they go to church and they study the Bible and they're telling other people why they're wrong? You're breaking the law. I mean, Christ's commands are, "If you really love me, here's how it's going to be demonstrated: in the way that you love others." I mean, here's good theology right here. How you treat other people as a demonstration of the God you say you believe in.

(28:21)

Married people, listen up. Listen up. This is marriage 101. How you treat your spouse is a demonstration of the God that you say you believe in. Kids, how you treat your parents is a demonstration of who you believe the God you say you serve is. Parents, how you treat your kids, demonstration. How you treat your neighbor. So then we begin to ask questions like this: "Well, where's this stop? Where's my influence stop? Who can I stop with? Because there's some people out there that drive me nuts."

(28:52)

And that's the parable of the Good Samaritan. Because if you remember, for a Jew, the most important people in the day were the priests and the Levites. And when this guy was beaten up and left half-dead, who comes by first when Jesus has this fictitious story, he's making up this parable? A priest and a Levite. They didn't do squat. But along came who? A Samaritan. Why? Because Jews hated Samaritans. If Jesus was telling the story to you, who would be the two people that you value that walk on by? And then who would be the person he said, "And along came the..." What would he say to you? To the leader of the KKK, he would say, "Along came the African American." To Sean Hannity he would say, "Along came the Democrat." To Rachel Maddow he would say, "Along came Donald Trump."

(29:39)

Do you see what I'm saying? I mean, in our heart, we all have these things stored up, and even if we try to press them down when we get them pushed, we can

politicize it, we can massage it, we can make it "Nobody really sees how I really feel," but God sees, and it comes out because you don't genuinely love that person because of your own prejudice. And there's no place for prejudice in the kingdom, because all people are welcome from every tribe, tongue, and nation. And no matter what sin you've sinned, you're welcome at the cross of Jesus Christ. Amen? That's the body of Christ.

(30:09)

So Christ is our example. So what did Christ do in his ministry? The only group of people he could meet, as we said before, were sinners. That's all he met. So I mean, he meets Zacchaeus, who's robbed people blind in his own town, says, "I must eat at your house today." And Zacchaeus repents and gives half of his money back. He meets the woman caught in adultery and he says, "Woman, where are your accusers?" Said "They're gone." He goes, "I don't accuse you either." But the story doesn't end there. What's he say? "Now go and sin no more. You know what you were doing was wrong, and I know what you were doing was wrong." He tells the woman in Samaria, "You're right. You're telling me the truth. You don't have a husband. The fact is, you've had five, and the man you're living with right now is not your husband. Good job. You answered correctly."

(30:48)

He doesn't let people get away with their sin. Because sometimes when people hear a sermon like this, they're like, "Oh, pastor, we got to stay holy." Yeah, stay holy.

Live for God. It doesn't mean that you can't be loving to another person. Holiness requires that you're loving to another person. Hold your standards and love others. That's what he's saying. That's what he's saying.

(31:10)

And Jesus modeled this all throughout his ministry. He even loved the Pharisees. He even loved the people that put him on the cross that were yelling, "Crucify him, crucify him, crucify him," which is exactly what you and I would've been calling had we been there. And even when he is on the cross, he's talking to his dad, "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." Don't know what they're doing? They know exactly what they're doing. They want him dead. They didn't realize they were killing the Lord Jesus Christ. He wasn't holding even that sin against them.

(31:37)

How can we hold things against other people? How can we have unforgiveness in our heart when Jesus Christ came out of Heaven to earth and didn't hold anything against us? How, then, can we hold something against somebody else? Amen? Impossible.

(31:54)

I know this is convicting, because I've been studying this all week and I've been convicted as I've been doing this, but you think about Jesus and he's like, "Here's how people are going to know that you're of me." In John 13:34-35, he said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that

you also love one another. By this, all men will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another." So we're called to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, love our neighbor as ourselves. But now Jesus says this, "A new commandment I give you. Love one another even as I have loved you." So not only do you have to love people the way you would want to be loved, but you got to love people the way that Jesus would love them.

(32:33)

And how am I going to do that? Because Colossians 1:28 says, "The mystery of the gospel is Christ in you, the hope of glory." He's the one in you that's wanting to love the person across from you. He's the one wanting to do the work through you. He's the one wanting to come into your sphere of influence and let other people see what it's like to hold fast to holiness and hold strong to love all at the same time. That's what Jesus does, amen? That's who he is. That's what he's telling us.

(32:58)

And we see this all throughout the scriptures. I mean, as I mentioned earlier, on the night Jesus was betrayed in John 17, he prayed for unity in his church. No division. Unity. That they would all be one. With the same unity that he had with his dad, which was perfect, that the church would have with each other so the world would know that Christ sent them and that he loved them.

(33:21)

How's the world going to know that Jesus Christ is loving? Yeah, one is by

worshiping the Lord and going vertical and praising his name and hearing his word and being obedient and doing all that. The other is by not having prejudice and bias so we can be united. I mean, you have real church. I mean, you're prejudiced against X, Y, and Z. Some of the people you're prejudiced with are going to be in Heaven with you for all eternity. They are.

(33:46)

And on this side of Heaven, what people want to see is, they want to come into a group and see they black, white, red, brown, all different color skin, all ages, whether you're old, whether you're young, they want to see all sorts of different socioeconomic backgrounds. They want to see the whole gamut and see that everybody's welcome, and they can't figure out "What is it that brings you all together?" Then we got an opportunity to share. It's the blood of Jesus. "It's his death on the cross. It's his resurrection from the dead. It's not us, it's him. We worship him. Do you want to come worship him too? He died for you as well."

(34:19)

That's the church. That means people from every tribe, tongue and nation, people from every background, people from every sin, are welcome at the cross of Jesus to experience the full measure of grace and forgiveness, and we should never shut anybody out from that. Amen?

(34:35)

Now, I don't have time to read this entire section, but I'd encourage you this

week if you want to be convicted about this, read 1 John 4, starting in verse 7. I'll just read a few verses. 1 John 4, starting in verse 7, he says, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." When you're genuinely loving other people that are different than you and they're not holy, but you're still loving them, you know you're of God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. If you're not loving, you don't know the God of the Bible, no matter what you profess with your lips. "By this, the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent his only begotten son to the world, that we might live through him, and this is love. Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought to love one another."

(35:32)

If you understand the gospel, if God's loved you with a radical love to forgive all of you, then we should be loving other people with the same kind of love. And he says this: "No one has seen God at any time. If we love each other, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us." Now, notice what he goes on to say at the end of this chapter. We love why? Because he first loved us. If someone says, "I love God" and hates his brother, which means "I can't stand him, I disdain him. I'm prejudiced against him," someone says he loves God and acts like that, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

(36:12)

You can't love the God that you can't see if you don't love the people around you. Loving people around you is evidence that you love the God you can't see. And this is the commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also. Who's our example? Christ. Love. "Well, it's impossible for me to love him." Apart from Christ, it would be. But you can demonstrate love to people that think very differently and act very differently than you by still speaking the truth, but speaking the truth in love because you care for their soul and you want to stay on mission.

(36:46)

The question it really becomes is, how do you love, honor and esteem all those people that come into your path? "Well, I got to know who they are first." No, that's the whole point. You just demonstrate it because of who you are in Christ. And if prejudice is our sin and our problem and Christ is our example, then how do I make application? It's like, "What do you want me to do this week?" And here's what God would tell us, that mercy is our application. Mercy is our application.

(37:13)

Grace is giving you what you don't deserve. "For it is by grace you have been saved through faith, not your own doing." It's a gift of God. Grace is like, "You don't deserve this. I'm giving it to you anyway." Mercy is, "You do deserve this judgment. You do deserve this chastisement. You do deserve all that, but I'm going to relent. I'm not going to give it to you." That's mercy. Lord, have mercy. You were saved by the mercies of God as well, right?

(37:37)

Notice what he says. He says in verse 11, "For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery' also said, 'Do not commit murder.' Now, if you do not commit adultery, but you do commit murder, you have become a transgressor to the law." So again, remember what we talked about? You can't cherry-pick which ones you're going to keep. You can't hear a message like this and say, "Yeah, I'm not willing to apply mercy. I'm working on Bible study right now. I'm working on tithing right now."

(38:06)

If you were before a judge and you were convicted of murder and you were guilty of murder, and right before the judge was to pronounce sentencing for you, you said, "Time out, judge, I'm guilty. Guilty as charged. I murdered him. But one thing you need to know, I've never committed adultery." Does that help?

(38:27)

Here's what he's trying to say. One day you're going to stand in front of the judge of the universe, which is going to take everything into consideration, and you don't want to be standing before the Lord telling him how many Bible studies you were in and how much church attendance you had and all you did if you didn't demonstrate love to the ones in your sphere of influence.

(38:45)

I'm all about knowing more about the Bible. I'm all about you growing in that. I want you to. But if you're brand new to the Bible and you really don't know anything,

except "I just know that Jesus loves me and I just got saved and I know nothing about the Bible," if that's you, welcome. Here's how you can grow in your understanding of the Bible. Just start loving everybody around you. Just start loving them.

(39:03)

"Well, how much is too much?" You can't love too much. Ask your spouse when you get home what the limit is. Ask your kids, "Hey, have I loved you too much?" Ask your neighbors, "Have I done too much for you?" I mean, the reality is, no matter how much we give, we can always do more, right? So mercy is the application.

(39:24)

Notice what he says in verse 12: "So speak and so act." I mean, we've talked about this. If you're walking your talk, it means you're not only doing this, but you're telling people why you're doing this. It's important to speak the truth about Jesus. It's important to walk the truth about Jesus. It's important to walk the truth of Jesus. It's also important to speak the truth about Jesus, so speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty.

(39:46)

How are we judged? As Christians, we're judged by the law of liberty. The 10 commandments were fulfilled in Christ. The law was fulfilled in Christ. He died. He's the fulfillment of the law. He died on the cross because we couldn't fulfill it, and he rose from the dead, and when we repent and turn to Christ for the forgiveness of our sin, and we have Christ in us, the fulfillment of the law, that's the law of liberty.

(40:10)

How are we judged? We're all judged at what we do at the cross. Have you accepted responsibility for the fact that you're a sinner and you'll never ever have a relationship with God? Have you repented of that and trusted Jesus as your only way to Heaven? If you have, that's called the law of liberty. It means I don't have to run around every day, "Did I do this right? Did I do that right? Am I doing this right?"

(40:33)

Ah, forgiven. Thank you, Jesus. I'm free. That's the law of liberty. Act as though you're living like that. Act as one who's living like that, and then do what? What's he say in the next verse? He says in the very next verse, "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment." Friends, we live in a culture that wants to judge everybody by every single word out of their mouth. You can't say one thing without somebody jumping all over that. You can't hang out with somebody that somebody doesn't like without them jumping all over that.

(41:10)

We live in a world that if I walk into a room, we live in a world where somebody could say, "Hey, just your presence here offends me." That's the world we live in. I mean, judgment, judgment, judgment, judgment, judgment. What do we have to do? You return it with mercy. It's spiritual judo. You can't do judgment for judgment. It doesn't work. Judgment? All right, cool. You can judge me. I'm already free. "Christ forgave my sin. He's willing to forgive yours too. I'm going to pray for you. I'm going to

love you." Right? That's how we can return.

(41:39)

You get opportunities for mercy of not giving people what they do deserve. I mean, if you pray today and say, "God, give me an opportunity," you'll have more opportunity than you can even handle this week. Go eat at a restaurant. I've discovered there's some people that serve at restaurants that are not gifted at serving. And show them mercy. Showing them mercy does not mean "You were horrible tonight, and I'm still going to tip you because I'm a Christian." Mercy means give them a huge tip, tell them they did great, move on your way, because you're showing mercy because you love Jesus.

(42:13)

Somebody mistreats you or they come after you. "God, you saw it. I'm just giving them mercy. I'm not coming down on them." That's mercy. You look for opportunities for mercy, you'll have myriads of them all week long. And here's what you're going to think if you're prejudiced. "Well then, when do they get theirs? When are you going to punish them?" But here's how we think as Christians. Punishment's coming, because anybody that doesn't know Christ, there's a wrath that's coming you wouldn't want anybody to experience.

(42:41)

Because it all takes place at the cross, it's what do you do at the cross? See, Jesus Christ died on the cross because of my sin. Jesus Christ died on the cross

because of your sin. Jesus Christ died on the cross because of their sin outside the church, and God the Father is going to hold everyone eternally accountable for how they killed his son. That's why you need Jesus.

(43:05)

You can be the most moral whatever religion you want to be, but without Jesus, you have no hope because the wrath of God's going to come on you. And the wrath of God's already over you, which is the message, which is why you need to turn from your sin and repent, because God loves you so much he provided a way for you that you could not provide for yourself. He gave you Jesus so you could come into a relationship with him. Amen?

(43:24)

And that's when you start demonstrating mercy. Demonstrating mercy is also sticking up for other people. It's when other people are talking about others and judging others that you're not going to do that. I remember when I played football at the University of Illinois some years ago, I was coming out of a class and this guy walked up to me. We were in the same class together, and he said to me, he goes, "Hey." He goes, "Jeff, have you heard the one about the black guy who..." And I said, "Hey, time out." I said, "You should wait." I said, "My roommate's black," and I said, "he's going to be coming by here in just a few minutes." I said, "He may enjoy this joke more than you." And he about swallowed his tongue and walked away. He never talked to me again the entire semester.

(44:00)

What was I doing? I was giving him mercy. It's like, "Don't you dare talk about another brother in Christ that way." I'm not celebrating that, right? That's what it means to be merciful. That's what it looks like. And if you pray for opportunities to show mercy to people, that's the people that don't deserve it. God, put somebody in my life that doesn't deserve any mercy this week so that I can show them that. I promise you he'll answer your prayer. It'll come at the worst time, in the worst way, right?

(44:28)

Go to DIA and stand in line, do something. Because God always does these things. I think that's why God has us go to the DMV once every five years just to renew our license so that we can practice. You know what I'm saying? I mean, if you're looking for opportunities to dispense the mercy of God because of who you are in Christ, you're going to have myriads of opportunities, all day long, every day. Because what did Jesus do? He loved the world so much he was willing to suffer for the world. He loved the world so much he was willing to die for the world.

(45:01)

So if you really want to love people the way Jesus loved, don't be surprised when you suffer. Don't be surprised when you feel like "This is killing me." Well, you said you wanted to be more like Jesus. Now God's given you the opportunity. And you don't have to go looking very far. No matter who you are, if you want to live this out, if you recognize that prejudice is a problem in your heart, which it is, and you recognize that

Christ is the answer, he can redeem you, he can change you, and you're willing to be a dispenser of the mercy of God to other people, that's how you begin to walk your talk, too.

(45:35)

And God will give you opportunities so that when people are around you, they'll say, "I know you're steeped in your conviction, and I know you believe what you believe, but why is it you love me so much? Why is it you're kind to me? Why is it you're generous to me? I know you don't believe what I believe. I know you don't appreciate what I do. I know you don't like the way that I vote, but when I'm around you, you've been candid about that, but you haven't stopped treating me with honor and dignity and respect. What is that?" "Well, that's Christ in me, the hope of glory." That's what the world's looking for.

(46:04)

Not more mouthpieces without action, mouthpieces with action that demonstrate the love of Christ to a dying world. Amen? Because this God we serve is so great. "At the name of Jesus, every knee will bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." If you've never trusted him as your personal Lord and Savior, do it right now. If you trusted him as your personal Lord and Savior, allow the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart and where he's shown you your prejudice. Don't beat yourself up and don't walk out of here and say, "I got to work on it."

(46:31)

Just say, "Lord, you have my life. Change it. Change me. Make me more like Jesus so I can be a living example on mission for you." Amen? Would you stand with me?

(46:42)

Our Father in Heaven, we give you all the glory, honor and praise. We thank you for your word which challenges us and corrects us and encourages us. Father, thank you for a church that loves you, that no matter what background or socioeconomic group or color of skin, Lord, thank you for a group of people that love one another here. Lord, just take the prejudice out of our life and let us live for you and change us and grow us in Jesus' name.

(47:06)

If you're here today and you've never responded to the gospel and you know that you're going to be held eternally responsible for Christ's death, here's how you can pray. "Lord Jesus, I need you. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I want to turn all my sins over to you. I want to exchange them for your very life right now. Come into my life and be my Lord and savior. Rescue me, change me and make me just like you."

(47:30)

Father, we give you all the praise and glory and honor for your son Jesus and your Holy Spirit who in dwell all of us who believe. We sing to you and we bless your name, the name of Jesus, amen and amen. Can we give God some praise for who He

is?