

## RACE PREJUDICE.

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." Acts 10:34.

There is no passion that holds sway in the human breast any more unreasonable than race prejudice. A man's belief in the superiority of his own race is never grounded on logic or reason. Hardly any other belief can find support on such trivial and stupid grounds. But the more stupid and unreasonable a man's belief in the superiority of his own race the more stubbornly he clings to it. Hitler's claim that the Aryan race is superior to the Jews is as stupid and senseless as any ever accepted by a great people. But this does not keep the German people from clinging to it stubbornly. When a man states his belief in the superiority of his own race he doesn't consider himself under any obligation to give a reason for his belief. Race prejudice is like religious prejudice, it does not have to have reason or logic to support it. There is no other belief so hard to discuss with a man. When you have tried to argue with a man over his own belief in his race superiority you feel like the Negro woman did. She got up in church and proposed some measure. A man in the back of the church arose to his feet and began objecting stoutly. The woman started to answer his objection, but just then she noticed he was drunk. She said, very sweetly, "Honey, I was goin' to tell you somethin, but you ain't got nothin' to take it home in."

The prejudice of the Jews against other races rested on religious grounds. They made no distinction as to a man's color, the beauty and charm of his person, or the extent of his intelligence. It was as much a violation of their social standards for a man to eat with a Greek philosopher as it was for him to eat with an Ethiopian slave. The man Cornelius was a white man of the dominant race of his day. He held a high position in the Roman army. He stood higher in the accredited circles of society than Peter could ever hope to stand. But according to Peter's social code it was a great shame to sit down and eat with this man. No matter how just and good he might be he was still barred from the society of a Jew. To spend the night in his home was enough to make a Jew a social outcast.

To us this looks like the most stupid blindness. Yet it had about as much foundation as any race prejudice. Doubtless the world will one day look back on the prejudice of the white man for the black and yellow races with as much contempt as we look on theirs. If anything, their feeling of race superiority had more foundation than ours. For fifteen hundred years the Jews were the only race to acknowledge Jehovah as God. They were the only race called by his name. They were the only people whose lives were governed by His great moral law. They not only felt themselves superior to other races, but they were superior in honesty, virtue, and purity.

Their mistake was in supposing their virtues gave them a superior claim on the mercy and favor of God. We are all one in His sight. If God favors one race above another it is no proof that He has forgotten the less favored. If a man has two sons and they quarrel, the father may be forced to take sides with the son the least in the wrong. But the favored son will soon find himself slipping in the father's favor if he tries to crowd the other out of his heart. The moment he tries to do this he will find there is an unquenchable love in the father's heart for his wayward boy. The elder brother thought the father had forgotten the prodigal son, but he hadn't. Not for a single day. All the time he was in the far country he sorrowed for him till his eyes grew dim with weeping. When he returned the uncharitable feeling of the eldest son hurt the father more than the prodigal's sins. The harshness and cruelty of the white man for the black man is more grievous to God perhaps than the poor black man's sins.

If all race prejudice were grounded on a moral inferiority for the despised race it would still be unjust. The prejudice of the elder brother rested on moral grounds. But his uncharitable behavior cut the father's heart like a knife. And this same prejudice kept him from forgiving his brother even after he had repented. But a race prejudice never rests wholly on moral grounds. Often when we think our prejudice rests on moral grounds we find, on closer examination, that it is not. The white

man's prejudice against the Negro is strengthened by the filth, disease, and low social standards of the Negro race. These evils are communicable. A too close intercourse with the Negro race might result in physical injury and a lowering of our own social standards. But a closer examination of our prejudice reveals practically the same feelings toward the clean, refined, and intelligent Negro. There are many Negroes today who are as clean, as honest, and as moral as the best white people. Yet they find the same harsh, cold, and unfeeling social barriers facing them as their lazy, dirty, dishonest neighbors do. If the white man were called on to give an account to the Great Judge for this feeling he would find it hard to explain.

The people in the East say the reason the white man's face is so fair is, that God asked him one day where was his colored brother, and it scared him so badly his face turned white. If the Great God of Heaven were to call on the white man today for an explanation for his racial feelings, I am afraid his face would turn paler than it is.

We laugh when we hear that the Chinese believe they are the sons of Heaven, while we are only the mangy offspring of the devil. The tragedy is that many of the Chinese believe this. Their dark error hurts no one but themselves. But a prejudice against a stronger race is more honorable than one that is directed at a weaker.

But as foolish as race prejudice is, it is one of the hardest to cure. You would think that after Peter's vision of the sheet let down from heaven he would be cured, especially after he found in Cornelius such a noble convert to the truth. But he wasn't. Nearly twenty years later, at Corinth, he allowed the social code that he seems here to have discarded, to drag him into a harsh and unfeeling act that wounded the hearts of some of the best people in that great church.

When I was a boy professed Christians used to excuse their feelings towards the Negro by saying they loved his soul. This subterfuge has often been used to excuse a lack of love for some unlovely person. Did you ever think how foolish such a statement is? If you do not love a man's body you certainly cannot love his soul. John says, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" If you cannot overcome your prejudice to love a man's body, which you have seen, how can you love his soul, which you have not seen?

I suppose the idea arose from the mistaken notion that a man's soul would be free from those blemishes and imperfections that mar the beauty and attraction of the human body. Why should we think this, especially of the souls of poor sinful men and women? If we could see the naked souls of some poor sinners I am afraid we would see a far more grievous spectacle than we see in their bodies. If we could see the souls of those neglected

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despised members of the race, distorted with vice and scarred with sin, it would be far less attractive than their bodies. If we allow a few defects and blemishes of the body to quench our love for men and women it is a very weak love.

From the standpoint of natural endowment there is no such thing as a superior race. How history mocks man's pride. Three thousand years ago travelers told the proud luxury-loving citizens of Babylon of a rude barbarous race of shepherds who grazed their flocks on the plains around Mt. Olympus. Stories of the rough half-savage life of these barbarians must have furnished amusement to the idle courtiers of that great city. If they heard later that these same shepherds were building a city on some faraway peninsular of Europe what was the to great Babylon? What a shock it would have been to their pride if they had known that this Athens would one day be more renowned than great Babylon herself. That her poets, her artists, her scholars, her philosophers would surpass all the great men of Persia and Egypt combined. That in the course of time these despised Greeks would lay their yoke on the necks of India and Persia.

In later years travelers told the rich and idle citizens of Athens of a race of barbarians who were building a city on the banks of the Tiber. Little did Athens dream, in the days of her strength and glory, that this Rome would one day be the seat of an empire greater than that of Cyrus and Alexander combined.

That her wealth and splendor would far surpass that of Babylon and that Greece, Persia, and India would one day wear the yoke of these Latin barbarians.

Proud Rome heard of a race of barbarians who made their homes in the dark forests of Northern Europe. Some of these fair men and women were brought to Rome to be sold as slaves. Pliny, one of Rome's wealthiest and most enlightened citizens, saw them and was much displeased with them. In his estimation they represented the most inferior branch of the human race. What a shock it would have been to Pliny if he had known that the descendants of these Anglo-Saxons would one day be lords of half the world, and that his own descendants would one day push a cart through their cities, selling peanuts and bananas to their children.

What a perishable thing is man's glory! What a fleeting thing is his greatness! If men could only know that no race is great or despised in the eyes of Him who created us. The day that a great cause moves any race to set their feet in the path of virtue, truth, honesty, and justice that day they become a great people. But no matter how rich and powerful a race becomes they cannot turn from this path. No former greatness can save a people from the destructive forces of greed, cruelty, and intolerance.