

“Some of My Best Friends Are . . .”

**Dear Antwort Mann,**

**Teach me about the word “Prejudice.” Is it a sin to be prejudiced? Why are people prejudiced?**

**Signed, “Fair-minded”**

Dear “Fair-minded,”

Just so we are clear: the word “Prejudice” means 1. “a preconceived judgment or opinion” 2. “an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge.” In other words, a prejudice is a position, not based on fact, but on opinion or bias in spite of the facts. It’s one thing to be prejudiced in favor of one’s sports team or particular brand of car; it’s another thing when applied to people, which I assume (and you know what that does!), is the basis for your questions.

Let’s get specific: “All Black people are lazy.” “All Irish people are drunks.” “All Polish people are dumb.” “All White people are devils.” “All Middle Eastern people are terrorists.” “All Jews are greedy.” “All politicians are crooks.” These are all examples of prejudices based, not on actual facts, but on stereotypes and feelings that divide people and cause some to regard others as less than human. This, of course, leads to all kinds of evil attitudes and actions.

So, why are people prejudiced? It can relate to upbringing, as people are taught by their elders to view others negatively because of their race, religion or ethnic backgrounds. It can also relate to personal experience, such as being hurt by, say, a black or oriental person, making us afraid of all who are of those groups. It also may come from lack of exposure to those who are “different” from us. There is a natural fear of the unknown, so if the only people around us are of our own race or ethnic background, we tend to be wary of those who aren’t.

This all comes from living in a fallen, sinful world where there are bad people who do bad things that make the rest of us wary. It also comes from our own sinful natures that tend to put up divisions and barriers between people, denigrating some in order to exalt others. Everyone, even the most “liberal” among us, have prejudices they may be unaware of until forced to face them.

Yet, people are just that – people. All are created by God as part of His amazing patchwork of creativity and variety and, as sinners, are redeemed only through the shed blood of Christ. While the unfortunate aspect of living in this world often creates prejudices toward others, our redemption in Christ also should create in us a love for all for whom Christ died and, by faith, unites into one Body, the holy, Christian Church. To be prejudiced against someone simply because of the color of his skin, language or ethnic background is, indeed, sinful and stands in opposition to the will of our Savior. Because some deep-seated prejudices may never be overcome in this life, God calls us to daily contrition for our sins, faith in Christ’s Word and Work for us, and recognition of the value and worth of all people for whom, along with us, Christ died to redeem.

***“There before me was a great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They cried in a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’” Revelation 7:9 – 10***

Best Regards,  
Der Antwort Mann