



September 2, 2018
“All Are Welcome”
Isaiah 56
Pastor Gary Hamrick

In Isaiah 56, the prophet Isaiah addressed the problem of exclusivity, in that God’s people thought of themselves as being an exclusive club to which “foreigners” and “outcasts” were not invited. In this chapter we also see how God expressed his heart for those who felt excluded. God’s message through Isaiah was both a warning to those who felt exclusive *with* God, and a welcome to those who felt excluded *from* God. It’s good for us to examine our own hearts in these areas and ask ourselves two questions: Do we have any prejudice toward people we have excluded; Do we think that God doesn’t love us or accept us, which makes us feel excluded? In this message, Pastor Gary will help us understand that both of these perspectives are wrong, plus he will help us align our hearts with the heart of God.

There’s No Exclusive Club

1. Pastor Gary said: “[It’s wrong when God’s people] see themselves as part of an exclusive club made up of self-righteous people. [The] fact is that this has been a problem all through history when you look at Scripture, and Isaiah addressed a version of it in his own day... The Jewish people saw themselves as an exclusive club that belonged to God, which foreigners and outcasts were not invited to. [In] a similar way... the foreigners and the outcasts saw themselves as [being] too unworthy to be accepted by God anyway. [So, God spoke] through Isaiah to confront and to correct this thinking. [God challenged and warned those who felt like they were part of the exclusive crowd, and he welcomed those who felt excluded].”
2. The Jews are God’s chosen people.
 - a. **Deuteronomy 7:6** - *“For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the*

- earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”*
- b. **Deuteronomy 14:2** - “[For] you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.”
 - c. **Deuteronomy 26:18** - “And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands.”
 - d. **Exodus 19:5** - “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession...”
 - e. **Psalms 135:4** - “For the LORD has chosen Jacob to be his own, Israel to be his treasured possession.”
 - f. **Romans 9:3-5** - “For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.”
 - i. Pastor Gary said of Paul’s remarks about the Jewish people: “They were and are the chosen people of God in the sense that God chose them as a vehicle, that through this race of people a Messiah would be born from this race of people to bring salvation to all races of people.”
 - ii. The Jewish people didn’t exist until God chose Abram (named changed by God to Abraham), who was a pagan Gentile.
 1. In Hebrew, Abram means exalted father, and Abraham means the father of a multitude of people.
 - a. **Genesis 22:17-18** - “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”
3. For the first ten years or so, the Church was exclusively made up of Jews, who believed in Jesus Christ as the Messiah.
- a. **Galatians 2:15-16** - “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified.”
 - b. **Galatians 3:6-9** - “Consider Abraham: ‘He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’ Understand, then, that those who believe are

children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.' So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

- c. Pastor Gary said: "If it's all about obeying the law, then Abraham had no hope because Abraham [lived] about 600 years before the law was even given! ... [The key for Abraham] was faith. ... In New Testament times there were these people call the Judaizers who [believed it was Jesus plus the Jewish rituals, circumcision, and the Jewish Feasts]. ... [Paul's message was that people don't need to join the 'club' but rather they needed to have faith in Jesus Christ to be accepted into God's family].
4. Peter struggled with "exclusive club" prejudice.
- a. Pastor Gary provided the following brief outline of [Acts 10](#).
 - i. Peter was in Joppa, a port city on the Mediterranean Sea.
 - ii. God gave Peter a vision, which addressed the prejudice in Peter's heart.
 - iii. In the vision Peter saw all kinds of unclean animals, and Peter was told to kill and eat.
 - 1. [Acts 10:14-15](#) - "*Surely not, Lord!*" Peter replied. *'I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.'* The voice spoke to him a second time, *'Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.'* "
 - iv. God was telling Peter to stop thinking about people and animals as being unclean.
 - v. Peter was told to go to Cornelius and share the gospel, and miraculously, Cornelius and his entire household heard, received, and believed!
 - vi. Before he saw the vision from God, Peter would never have entered the home of a Gentile, because he was a member of the "exclusive club."
 - vii. [Acts 10:34-35](#) - "*[Peter said,] I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.*" (Emphasis added)
 - viii. [Isaiah 56:7](#) - "*... for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.*"
 - b. The Bible records another account of Peter's prejudice toward Gentiles in the book of Galatians.
 - i. [Galatians 2:11-13](#) - "*When Peter came to Antioch, I [Paul] opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the*

Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.”

- c. Pastor Gary said: “We need to ask ourselves [these questions]: Do we have an exclusive, prejudicial view of what the church should look like? Do you think the church should only be made up of people who look like you?”
5. Pastor Gary said: “[Prejudice] will not be tolerated [at Cornerstone Chapel] ever! *‘God does not show favoritism but he accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.’* And so should we! ... Heaven isn’t going to look like you. It’s going to look like all of us together, so let’s start practicing heaven now!”
 - a. **Revelation 5:9** - *“And [the twenty-four elders] sang a new song: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.’ ”*

No One Is Excluded

6. **Isaiah 56:3-8** - *“Let no foreigner [any non-Jew] who has bound himself to the LORD say, ‘The LORD will surely exclude me from his people.’ And let not any eunuch complain, ‘I am only a dry tree.’ For this is what the LORD says: ‘To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose what pleases me and hold fast to my covenant - to them I will give within my temple and its walls a memorial and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that will not be cut off. And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant - these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.’ The Sovereign LORD declares - he who gathers the exiles of Israel: ‘I will gather still others to them besides those already gathered.’ ”*
7. Pastor Gary said: “God [appealed] to the people who felt excluded, who felt estranged, who felt distant from God. He said, ‘My arms are open wide.’ Have you ever felt like this? Excluded [and thinking] God can’t possibly accept you, [and love you]. And some of you, even now, I can hear in your head, you’re probably saying things like: ‘Pastor [Gary] you have no idea what I’ve done. God can’t possibly accept me. He can’t possibly love me. Listen, I don’t know what you’ve done, and I don’t need to know what you’ve done. What I do know is that Jesus Christ died for all sins, no matter what you’ve done. [He] opens his arms to receive as many as would receive him and believe in his name. Do you think that Jesus died to make good people better? ... He died to make bad people, sinful people,

people with messed up lives, [all] of us, new creatures in Christ. ... You don't have to clean yourself up and then hopefully God will accept you. You come with your sinful life and all of the baggage of the past, and you say, 'Lord, this is who I am, thank you for dying for me, [and] thank you for receiving me.' ... So don't worry if [you don't feel good enough, because we are all unworthy], and none of us is good enough. But that's the good news, because a good God died for those who aren't good enough, and [he] paid the price with his own blood and he welcomes all who would believe and receive."

- a. **2 Corinthians 5:17-18** - *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation..."*
- b. **Romans 3:23-24** - *"[For] all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*

Discussion Questions

1. Read **Isaiah 56:1-8** to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. How has the Holy Spirit challenged and changed you concerning prejudice? (See #1 above)
3. Read and discuss the Scriptures Pastor Gary shared concerning the Jews being God's chosen people. (See #2 above)
4. Provide an overview of Acts 10 and the account of Peter's struggles about the "exclusive club" and those who weren't worthy of being in the club. (See #4a above)
5. Read and discuss **Acts 10:34-35**. (See #4a-vii above)
6. Read and discuss **Galatians 2:11-13** regarding Peter's prejudice toward Gentiles. (See #4b above)
7. Spend time talking about Pastor Gary's emphatic statement concerning prejudice. (See #5 above)
8. Read and discuss Pastor Gary's comments about the fact that no one is excluded. (See #7 above)
9. Close your time in prayer as the Holy Spirit leads.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).