

Sunday, April 25, 2021 pm

Problems Christians Face
(like everybody else)
JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

It is no secret that we are living in disturbing times, especially as Christians. One of the underlying concerns I have with our society today is its extreme intolerance of differing views. I believe this is one of the fundamental issues driving the hateful behaviors and attitudes that our news media loves to lead with. It is seen in the way we treat each other concerning this pandemic, racial issues, political issues, various social issues, and even in matters of morality.

We are so polarized that if someone holds a different view than you, they feel justified in vilifying you and even treating you hatefully – including the destruction of property, livelihoods, reputations, etc. This is also borne out in the various sources of dissemination information – whether it be the entertainment industry, the news media or our social media. Far too often, they are guilty of only presenting one side of an issue and vilifying those who dare to disagree. Social media posts find far too many who are quick to share something they agree with, whether it is true or not, and whether or not it is completely accurate, misleading or kind.

And as Christians, we are not exempt from this. I have mentioned how I have observed incredibly bad behavior among brethren over how we should handle this pandemic, political issues AND spiritual issues in areas where we disagree. I have seen brethren who are quick to jump to conclusions about those they disagree with, even passing judgment on their motives or spiritual condition (questioning their salvation) because of some political, social or spiritual decision they have made. Friends, this is NOT a good thing, and it is a sinful attitude.

With these thoughts in mind, this evening I would like to address the subject of jumping to conclusions from a Biblical perspective.

i. Some Examples in Scripture

- a. ***The tribes east of the Jordan*** – This is the consummate example of jumping to conclusions. Israel had conquered Canaan and divided its lands. Being done, the tribes that had settled east of Jordan finally returned home. When they did, they built a great, impressive altar (Joshua 22:10). But when the children of Israel west of the Jordan heard of this, they were troubled and called together all their tribes, crossed the river and confronted the three tribes. Joshua 22:16. They were assured that it was not an idol, but a memorial. Joshua 22:21-29 they explained exactly their purpose.
- b. ***In appointing David as King*** – 1 Samuel 16:6-7 – King Saul has been rejected and a replacement is chosen. Samuel goes to the house of Jesse. Samuel examines each of his sons and observes, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is among them.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “*Do not look at appearances or at his physical stature...man looks outward, but the LORD looks at the heart.*” David was not there but soon after came in.
How often do we look at outward appearances and assume that such is the right person, or that one is innocent (or guilty)?
- c. ***Naaman expecting some grand experience*** – 2 Kings 5. Recall, Naaman, a general of the Syrian army with leprosy. A slave girl of the Israelites tells him of a prophet who could heal him. Naaman finds Elisha who sends his servant to the door and tells him to dip in the river Jordan 7 times. Naaman is upset, expecting something grand (2 Kings 5:11-12). He leaves in a rage until his servants reason with him. He dips as instructed and is cleansed of his leprosy.
How often do we find ourselves in a situation where we expect events to unfold a certain way in our favor? And when it doesn’t happen that way, we become upset or even angry.
- d. ***Job’s friends – “What have you done?”*** – the book of Job describes a righteous man who loses everything materially. And when his friends come to him, over and over they tell him he is guilty of sin and urge him to repent. Job declares his innocence throughout the book. But his friends still do

not believe him, until the LORD appears and rebukes them all. Job was not suffering because he was a sinner.

Sometimes, we see someone going through something and we ASSUME the reasons behind it have to be because of sin. That is not necessarily the case.

- e. ***“Did this man sin or his parents?”*** – John 9:1-2.
This was an occasion where Jesus was with His disciples and they pass by a man born blind. They asked, “Who sinned?” Jesus said neither.
Again, we have an assumption based upon outward observations. We try and guess why they are in that situation and often use faulty information in the process (they believed that disabilities were the product of someone’s sin).
- f. ***“These men are drunk”*** – Acts 2:12-13. On the day of Pentecost, where the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in the languages of those present. It was unusual and amazing. Some mocked saying, “They are full of new wine.” Peter immediately dispels that rumor (vs. 14-15)
In this I am reminded that we might see someone stagger or stumble and assume they are drunk, but there may be other circumstances – a disability, a medical episode, etc.
- g. ***That Jesus was a sinner*** – e.g. John 9:24, again after restoring sight of the blind man. Because Jesus didn’t keep the Sabbath (the way THEY had interpreted it), they made up their mind He was a sinner. Throughout His preaching and teaching, they rejected Jesus, because they didn’t like what He said or what he stood for. On another occasion when they are condemning Him, Nicodemus seeks to defend Him to at least get a fair trial. Note John 7:51 – Does our law judge a man before it hears him? They are not interested.
Here we find one jumping to conclusions with evil intent. They absolutely refused to accept Jesus so everything He did was wrong. (Sound familiar?) This is DISHONESTLY jumping to conclusions. Sadly, this happens more often than we care to admit.
- h. ***That Paul had polluted the temple*** – Acts 21:27-30 – After Paul’s 3rd preaching trip, he is in Jerusalem trying to appease the Jews. Paul is spotted in the temple complex and people cry out that he was their enemy and of the law. They also alleged that Paul had brought a Greek (Trophimus) into the temple. This stirred up the crowds to the point of creating a mob. Paul had to be rescued.
Here we find another example of one WANTING to find fault with another. They fabricated the worst possible scenario and made accusations to that effect. Others, zealous for the cause joined in, not knowing the whole truth. How many today, because of some strong political or moral view will join the bandwagon when they see or hear something that bolsters their position, WITHOUT investigating whether or not it is true. This is especially true on social media today.
- i. ***That they could get rid of Jesus*** – finally, we notice that toward the end of His ministry, the Jews were determined to get rid of Jesus once and for all – or so they thought. They schemed (John 11:47-50, Matthew 27:1-2) thinking they could solve the problem by executing Jesus. They even took precautions to seal the grave where He was. But we know that they failed, because He arose from the dead on the first day of the week.
How many today take action thinking they can stop God’s plans from being accomplished. They may win a temporary battle, but it is up to us to see that they do not win the war (and they won’t).
- j. In each of these, we see the problem with jumping to conclusions.

ii. **Some thoughts about jumping to conclusions**

- a. ***We are not saying you should not reach conclusions*** – John 7:24 tells us to judge with a righteous judgment. At times, we have to make unpleasant judgments and conclusions. And at times all the facts bear out the truth and if we are to remain true to God, we must take action.
So I am NOT at all saying, we cannot reach conclusions! This is about jumping to conclusions WITHOUT all the facts, OR with blinders. Just like the pharisees in Matthew 13:14-15.

- b. ***This could fit into the category of wrongful judging*** – Matt. 7:1-5, James 2:1-4. Prejudice, self-righteousness in judging, etc. often lead to DELIBERATE jumping to conclusions.
- c. How can we prevent jumping to conclusions? Here are some suggestions.
- i. **Realize that things are not always as they seem** – Proverbs 14:12 – *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.*
Anyone who has been around knows that appearances can be deceiving!
Just beware that it is possible you do not have all the facts!
 - ii. **Give the benefit of the doubt** - love thinks no evil; believes all things. 1 Corinthians 13:5-7.
As Christians we ought to want the best in a given circumstance, and as much as possible assume that one meant no harm.
Accept that others are different – this is something I have learned, or should I say been more greatly enlightened about, during the fallout from this pandemic. This applies to observations about society AND one another as brethren. Ephesians 4:2 speaks of bearing with one another with love.
 - iii. **Investigate before you reach a conclusion** – then you have not jumped.
Acts 17:11 - Searched the scriptures.
Proverbs 18:13, *He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.*
When possible and if necessary (sometimes the best thing to do is just “let it go!”), ask and get clarification. We SHOULD be able to talk to one another openly and kindly as brethren.
 - iv. **Be alert** - Matthew 24:4 – take heed that no one deceives you. This applies to the Facebook posts, what you see on television, and in other places where so many have agendas.
 - v. **LISTEN!** – James 1:19. How many problems and heartaches can we prevent if we just take the time to listen!
 - vi. **Will I look within at myself before I react?** One of the things we have learned in our evidences classes are to understand we all have preconceived ideas and bias. If you stand for anything, you will have presuppositions. And that is not wrong, PROVIDED you are honest about it and do not let it lead to unjust judgments of others.
 - vii. **Ask, “Does it really matter?”** IOW, is this something worth getting worked up over? Is this a TRUE Romans 14 matter? (Romans 14 is about bearing with one another in differences that are matters of liberty) I believe one of the lessons to be gleaned from what we have dealt with over the past year helps us better appreciate Romans 14. The debate over masks and vaccines is a Romans 14 issue.
 - viii. **THINK before you speak AND post!** Again, James 1:19 – part 2 – Be slow to speak! Put your mind in gear before you put your mouth into motion. Can what I say or post be misunderstood? Is the post I read from another misunderstood? IS IT TRUE?????? If not, and I share it, I have taken part in a lie.
Does it further divide? And if so, is it really worth it? Again, there are things about truth that will divide and we must take a stand, but there are some things that we simply do not have to say or do!

Jumping to conclusions! It is something to be avoided and another area where we as Christians can be examples, shining lights in a crooked and perverse generation that so desperately needs to see more of it (Philippians 2:15). If we will ALL apply these things in our dealings with others, I believe we will be better off AND closer to one another as brethren. And I do NOT think I am jumping to a conclusion in saying that. Think about it!