

On Love and Hate

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I probably am not in the right frame of mind to be writing a blog this week about Thanksgiving. Sometimes my heart becomes overwhelmed by all the evil, suffering, and arrogance in the world today. Yet, in the midst of all these terrible things, there is still a great arrogance in people. I'm not just talking about their ungratefulness because they feel they deserve so much more, I see a determination to get what they want, even if it hurts others. What kind of evil is this?

The arrogant attitude behind so many people is what sustains the ever-increasing levels of evil and suffering in the world. Usually I try to avoid meditating on all of this, but it's hard to hide yourself from it any longer. Every where you turn people are hurting one another, blaming one another, and hating one another. Sometimes my fear is that my love will grow cold—worse than that is, my love will turn to hate.

It's funny I feel this way right now, because I have been studying "hate" in the Bible for some time. Does God hate? Is there ever a time for us to hate someone? (Ecclesiastes 3:8) I can safely say I hate it when people destroy each other, I hate it when they lie to one another, but can I ever say I hate someone for what they do? With everything I see in the Word of God I am more afraid to speak on this subject than ever. Also, I realize I am farther away from understanding the love of God than ever. Sad, but true.

As a Pastor, it grows harder and harder to accept the kindnesses of people towards me when I know how they treat others. It's almost like they are buying my affections to bask in my approval, so they can then turn and hate others without a care. Can we truly love some without loving all? How can we love what is evil? How can we love people who on one hand treat you well, but on the other hand treat others shamefully? I wonder sometimes if I don't do this myself. What is the answer to a question I cannot even form in my mind?

Rather than being thankful this holiday season, I am disturbed, mournful, and perplexed. How can there be true love without a pure hatred for what is evil? How can we love God and hate others? (1st John 4:20) Is not much of the evil, suffering, and death in this world caused by our hate for one another? Is not the answer found in the words of Jesus when he instructs us to love one another? (John 13:34, 35)

Of the close to 80 times the Bible mentions hate, probably half the time it is referring to the actions of people, rather than the people themselves. However, I have trouble separating people from their actions and their words. In fact we, as people, will be judged by God and others for those same actions and words. It is perplexing. Why? Because I guess I am looking for an excuse to hate people.

"The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong."

Psalms 5:5, NIV.

I am troubled by a God who *"so loved the world"* that he would love those who do wrong. I am thinking that maybe it is part of the watering down of our gospel in America. Maybe it is not biblical to love everyone. Maybe it is not even right to love everyone. At least not as the Bible defines love. I find quite a difference between someone who ignorantly does evil and one who arrogantly does it. This has been my secret struggle behind my pastorate for over the past year now. What is it to actually hate some people? Does hating them mean that I would not do right by them? If I do not do right by them, would I not also be doing what is evil?

I think to this point I have been trying to avoid and ignore what the Lord is trying to show me. I do not feel he is revealing suppressed hatreds in my heart, but trying to teach me that hatred is part of our makeup. We

are designed to love, therefore there are things we must hate. Embracing what is good means rejecting what is bad. Living to please God dictates that I must hate what is evil.

"I hate those who cling to worthless idols; I trust in the LORD."

Psalms 31:6, NIV.

Every time I feel I have this issue nailed down, I run across a verse that breaks my chain of thought. Because of this I wonder if I am not thinking on the wrong things. However, I do want to understand the heart of God on this matter. If I do, it will expand into understanding more about the judgment of God, the wrath of God, the eternal damnation of unjust souls, and so much more. Knowing God's goodness is always our first step towards him. Knowing his justice and righteousness makes us feel safe in his arms.

I may never nail this issue down to the point I can include it in doctrinal preaching, but I feel I must pursue it until I find that release that comes from the Holy Spirit's revelation. Have you ever studied something in the Bible to the point that it unfolds before you and then you can see it everywhere? That's the way I feel towards "hate" right now, I see it everywhere. However, I don't understand what I am seeing.

*"To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance,
evil behavior and perverse speech."*

Proverbs 8:13, NIV.

As I tried to get my mind off of this topic, I kept running across it in our weekly VERSE by VERSE series in Psalm 119. Four times this Psalm talks about this. It becomes abundantly clear that we are to hate as well as love. In fact to love one thing sometimes necessitates that we hate other things.

"I hate double-minded men, but I love your law."

Psalms 119:113, NIV.

"I hate and abhor falsehood but I love your law."

Psalms 119:163, NIV.

You may be thinking, "What's wrong with our pastor?" In a time when we should be thinking of all the things we should be thankful for, I am thinking about "hate." To protect myself from some well-meaning advisors who will read this and "minister" to me, at this point it is just a study, not an obsession. However, there is something in my heart that prompts me to understand biblical hate. I don't imagine its a word that comes up in your Bible study very often. Actually, its the first time I have studied it in my life. There are things and people in the Bible that godly saints said they hate. The same holds true for God. There are things (words and deeds) and people that he hates. I can guarantee you that God will send no one he loves to hell.

To sum it up let me leave you with an interesting statement I have fashioned on this topic: Is it the light that makes things visible or the contrasting shadows that bring clarity to those things?

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