

Testimony

God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. We love because he first loved us. (1 John 4)

Hymn, by H Kinsbury (c.1850)

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| 1. Come, let us all unite to sing: | God is love, God is love. |
| Let heaven and earth their praises bring; | God is love, God is love. |
| Let every soul from sin awake, each in his heart sweet music make, | |
| And sing with us, for Jesus' sake, | God is love! God is love! |
| 2. How happy is our portion here! | God is love, God is love. |
| His promises our spirits cheer; | God is love, God is love. |
| He is our sun and shield by day, our help, our hope, our strength, and stay, | |
| He will be with us all the way: | God is love! God is love! |
| 3. In glory we shall sing again: | God is love, God is love. |
| Yes, this shall be our lofty strain: | God is love, God is love. |
| While endless ages roll along, in concert with the heavenly throng, | |
| This shall be still our sweetest song, | God is love! God is love! |

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Scripture

- John 15:18-27

Prayer:

Gracious Father,

You are the God of all comfort and joy. You have revealed yourself to me through your Word, the Scriptures, through the beauty of this world and universe, through the example of dear friends, through those who have gone before me, through the faithful service of others who preach and teach.

Thank you for your patient dealings with me, for accepting me into your family and for giving hope to me and all who call upon your name.

Amen

Message: Hate

Sometimes a preacher jumps in where angels fear to tread! Taking "hate" as a sermon subject might be an application of that statement, but because the word and its derivatives appears in excess of 180 times in Scripture, and because hatred manifests itself regularly in our society, it is worthy of occasional investigation.

Hate

Hate is a highly emotive word, and one which we don't normally associate with the Christian life. It can be surprising, therefore, to discover that there are things that God hates. And if God hates, it must be that some hatred can be consistent with goodness and holiness and love.

So what are we talking about here? "I would hate to think she had an accident." No, not that. "Don't you just hate it when the printer stops working like that!" Not that either. "I hate him/them!" Yes, that sort of hatred. "I hate the injustice of it all." Yes, that too.

Two sorts of hatred we will consider. One being directed towards certain behaviour or action or inaction. The second directed toward another or others.

One of the challenges with a single word topic is to identify where in the Scriptures that word appears. Like most, I am not familiar with the original languages of Scripture, relying very much on the English translations. And what becomes clear is that a Hebrew or Greek word translated 'hate' in one translation is often translated differently in another, for example Gen 26:27 "hate/hostile/resent/so unfriendly", Gen 27:41 "hated/held a grudge/was furious", Gen 29:33 "hated/not loved/despised/neglected" but in Gen 37:4 different translation nearly always use "hated".

Therefore we will generalize and look at hate in the sense of disgust and revulsion directed at something or someone. In Gen 37:4,8 Joseph's brothers hated him. That sort of hate. And Exodus 18:21 "Men who hate a bribe." That fits too. And also Jesus' statement: "The world hates me ... and you."

Under what circumstances does God hate? When Isaiah spoke concerning the future favour of the Lord (Is 61), including a passage that Jesus applied to himself, he prophesied "I, the Lord, love justice; I hate robbery and iniquity." (61:8) There's no alternate words used here – it's "hate" in nearly every translation. And Zechariah tells us that God hates false promises and evil designs. Amos tells us God hates the outward appearance of godliness while underneath is all manner of evil. Falsehood, injustice, blatant hypocrisy, theft, evil intent are all listed explicitly as objects of God's hatred, but by extension it is clear that anything that works against the principles of loving God and loving neighbour are also objects of his hatred and by implication, his anger. And it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God.

It is therefore quite appropriate for us to hate what God hates. Of course that hatred needs to be managed carefully. The day before Jesus cleaned out the Temple, Mark tells us, "he looked around at everything". This was the time when Jesus would have got angry. Very angry. His Father's house was being badly abused by those who knew better. It's fair to say that he hated what he saw was being done. But it was the next day that he took appropriate action and cleaned out the Temple merchants. His response was controlled, commensurate with the circumstance and his anger was temporary – he did not hang on to it.

Does God hate people? Certainly David did, and said so several times – "I hate the assembly of evil-doers", "I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols", "I hate the double-minded", "I hate those who hate you, O Lord". In Revelation we read that God hates the work of the Nicolaitans, but we are not told that he hates the Nicolaitans themselves.

Hate

There is little (no?) evidence that God hates people, but he does oppose the proud and punish the wicked. And he does get angry with those who persist in sin.

We live in a world that often manifests hatred. We've all seen it. And we've all heard of it. Hatred within families, between families, between neighbours, between nations and people groups. And generational hatred, sometimes based on historic actions, sometimes based on myths. And associated with that hatred is anger and often violence, and an adamant refusal to forgive. Most of this is beyond our control, but we are all potential targets of hatred, some actual targets. Jesus was hated and he made it clear that his followers could experience the same. Maybe you are hated by someone who does not shy away from letting you, and maybe others, know. If there is a valid reason, then wait and pray for the opportunity to address it, but sometimes there is no reason, or no known reason, for such vitriol. Jesus acknowledged such was his situation: "They have hated both me and my Father," he said. "But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'" (John 15:25)

When there is no reason for hatred, it is really hard to handle and almost impossible to address. Under these circumstances, no amount of goodwill or kindness seems to make any difference. It certainly didn't in Jesus' case – the hatred was there till the end – "He saved others – can't save himself – hah!" they said. And if you look for it in our society you will see it. It's irrational and seemingly unresolvable. But the consequence of being on the receiving end of such hatred is often awful and fearful. Where will it end? What will happen? The antidote to fear is love we are told (1 Jn 4:18 and 2 Tim 1:7), and only God himself can provide that. Oh how we need grace! Sometimes the only solution for personal wellbeing under these circumstances is physical relocation, to remove oneself from the environment where the hatred manifests itself.

Hatred, like so many responses, is a choice, sometimes made for no valid reason. We must be diligent that no such thing gains control over us, whether directed at us, or, and especially, if the hatred resides within. If it's internal, it's under your control. It may be valid, or it may not be. With help from the Holy Spirit, understand it and deal with it! If it's external, but you are personally affected, ask for wisdom to know how to mitigate the impact. If it's external but you are not personally affected, pray about the situation, and maybe the Holy Spirit will guide you into some profitable action that you could undertake.

May the Lord God encourage and guide you in your walk with him, free from fear, and enabling you to deal with the circumstances of life.

Prayer with suffering Christians (*Barnabas Prayer 29/7/26*)

Lord God,

We pray for the success of Christian schools throughout the world, and especially in lands of great suffering and anti-Christian persecution. We ask You to fill those entrusted with leadership with Divine wisdom in governance and management so that values that reflect the Gospel are maintained.

Please raise up and bless the work of godly teachers to train up children in the way they should go, to produce lasting fruit all their lives. Protect and renew

Hate

pupils' minds and hearts to receive all the benefits of a Christian education through instruction, practical experience and healthy social interaction and grow in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray.

(Proverbs 22:6).

Hymn *by EH Bickersteth*

1. Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?
The blood of Jesus whispers peace within.
2. Peace, perfect peace, by thronging duties pressed?
To do the will of Jesus, this is rest.
3. Peace, perfect peace, with sorrows surging round?
On Jesus' bosom naught but calm is found.
4. Peace, perfect peace, our future all unknown?
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.
5. Peace, perfect peace, death shadows us and ours?
Jesus has vanquished death and all its powers.
6. It is enough; earth's struggles soon shall cease,
and Jesus, call to heaven's perfect peace.

Benediction:

In Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham has come to you, so that you might receive the promised Spirit through faith. (Gal 3:14)

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (Rom 8:11)

Amen.

This service was prepared by Warren Mack for HopeNet SA