

is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:37). Jesus command to hate family or self is clarified in this text to mean “love less.” We cannot truly love God if anyone or anything is set above Him in our heart’s devotion and affection. This isn’t just talking about hating behavior. While our family might practice sinful behavior, we can’t exalt even our family members who do right above God in our hearts. This shows that hate must be understood to have varying degrees of intensity—some that are sinful and some that are not.

“I Hope He Gets What’s Coming to Him!”

The Holy Spirit led Paul to write, “Love does no harm to a neighbor” (Rom. 13:10) and revealed through Zechariah, “Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor” (Zech. 8:17). If there is no sin in hating the behavior of the wicked, is it sin to desire their punishment? The Bible makes it clear that children of God bear a responsibility to warn the wicked. In two virtually parallel passages

Ezekiel was told that warning the wicked to turn “from his wicked way” delivers one’s own soul—whether the wicked heed the warning or not (Ezek. 3:18-19; 33:8-9).

If we have done what we can to rebuke the wicked, is it hatred to desire their punishment? The Thessalonians were comforted with the assurance that “it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you” (2 Thess. 1:6). If it is hatred to envision righteous punishment for those who do wrong, the Holy Spirit was urging hatred. That’s clearly not the case. This is illustrated from a number of statements found in the Psalms. The Psalmist prayed, “Break the arm of the wicked and the evil man; Seek out his wickedness until You find none” (Psa. 10:15). David declared, “Let the wicked be ashamed; Let them be silent in the grave” (Psa. 31:17). This is a desire for punishment and failure on the part of the wicked, but it does not constitute sinful hatred. The Holy Spirit led David to foresee God’s deliverance of the righteous, promising, “The righteous shall rejoice when he sees the vengeance; He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked” (Psa. 58:10). What a graphic image of punishment and retribution! How can a desire for just punishment be hatred if the “righteous” one day will “rejoice” to see the vengeance brought upon the wicked? This goes so far as prayers that beg the Lord, “Let the wicked fall into their own nets” (Psa. 141:10), or “May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more” (Psa. 104:35), and even, “Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked; Do not further his wicked scheme, lest they be exalted” (Psa. 140:8). This is not to say that Christians should derive some perverse pleasure from envisioning hardship on the wicked, but it is clear that it does not constitute hatred to desire just retribution upon the deeds of the wicked—especially after trying to warn them.



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What Constitutes Hatred?

By Kyle Pope

The New Covenant places great emphasis on the heart. Jesus taught His disciples to look beyond simply the command, “You shall not commit adultery” (Matt. 5:27)—disciples of Christ must recognize, “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28, NKJV). In a similar way, Jesus taught that it is not enough simply to obey the command, “You shall not murder” (Matt. 5:21). Jesus also taught, “whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt. 5:22). It is likely in light of this command that the Holy Spirit led John to write, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15).

To honor this emphasis on the heart Christians devote much time and study to understand exactly what constitutes *lust*, but have we spent enough time determining how Scripture defines *hate*? Do I hate someone if I find that person irritating? Do I hate someone if I don’t like him or her as much as I like someone else? Do I hate someone if I don’t like the person’s behavior or hope that sinful behavior will be justly punished? Such questions must be answered if we are to honor the Lord’s commands regarding this condition of the heart.

Must We Like Everyone the Same?

The Bible warns against both hatred and partiality (Jas. 2:1-9), but does it constitute hatred if we have a close relationship with someone that we do not have with someone else? No. Jesus shared close times with Peter, James, and John that He did not share with the other apostles (Matt. 17:1-

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM
9:30 AM
10:30 AM
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight
Blake McAlister
Walker McAnear
Sam Nunn
Lance Purcell
Justin Smiley
Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

13; Mark 5:37; 14:33), but that didn't mean that He showed partiality or hatred. Paul held Epaphras (Col. 1:7) and the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 2:8) "dear" to himself. There is nothing wrong with being closer to some people than we are to others so long as our behavior and attitude toward others does not become what it ought not be.

Does that mean we are guilty of hatred if we get frustrated or irritated with others? No. Paul once became "annoyed" with a young woman (and specifically) with the spirit that possessed her (Acts 16:18). He once had a "contention" that was so "sharp" with Barnabas that they parted from one another (Acts 15:39). Did those attitudes constitute hatred? No. He did not allow their conflict to lead to hatred, or his annoyance to manifest itself in hate. Christians will have people in their lives who act as an "adversary" (1 Tim. 5:14) or an "enemy" (Matt. 5:43). Most often this will be because they are "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18). Yet, even when the alienation is for other causes we cannot allow negative feelings we have towards them to blossom into hatred. But simply having negative feelings does not constitute hatred.

Hatred Directed at Christians

To consider what constitutes hatred we should note that more is said about hatred Christians will receive than is said about how hatred is defined. Can we determine from this what constitutes hatred? Perhaps. Jesus warned His disciples "you will be hated by all for My name's sake" (Matt. 10:22). Consider some behaviors Jesus said would accompany this hatred. He declared, "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake" (Luke 6:22). This may not tell us that hatred always involves acting to "exclude" or "revile" someone, but it certainly shows that such actions come from one who hates another. Jesus warned, "Then shall they deliver you up unto tribulation, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many stumble, and shall deliver up one another, and shall hate one another" (Matt. 24:9-10, ASV). Is one only guilty of hatred if he delivers one up to "tribulation," stumbles into sin, or betrays another person? Perhaps not, but such actions are certainly the deeds of those who may be said to "hate one another."

If I struggle with attitudes of frustration towards another person, but I work to treat them with love, kindness, and the care a disciple of Christ should show my frustration does not necessarily constitute hatred. On the other hand, if I treat someone with disrespect and neglect—if I "exclude" and "revile" him to others, while I may not be guilty of betraying or persecuting that person, my behavior demonstrates that I am not showing them the love I should. The Wise Man said, "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Prov. 13:24). This makes it clear that a failure to show love to others by proper behavior towards them constitutes being guilty of hatred towards them. What is true of parent-child relationships must surely be true of other relationships as well.

"By Their Fruits You Will Know Them"

Jesus taught of false prophets, "by their fruits you will know them" (Matt. 7:20). Just as the wicked fruit borne to false prophets reveals their true nature, the behavior demonstrated by a heart that hates reveals when hatred exists within the heart. The book of Proverbs illustrates this in numerous descriptions of what constitutes hate. We see, for example that the "scoffer" will come to "hate" the one who corrects him (Prov. 9:8). This reveals hatred as a disposition that resists correction. The Holy Spirit reveals that, "The poor man is hated even by his own neighbor" (Prov. 14:20), and "All the brothers of the

poor hate him" (Prov. 19:7). Here the resentment felt by those upon whom the poor takes advantage is described as hatred. According to the Wise Man, hatred is often demonstrated by dishonesty. He writes, "He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself" (Prov. 26:24), and "A lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it" (Prov. 26:28). To lie and deceive is a mark of hatred, but so is improper behavior and improper companionship. The Holy Spirit taught, "Whoever is a partner with a thief hates his own life" (Prov. 29:24). Behavior that is wicked reveals hatred for others and even for one's own soul. These descriptions show that sinful behavior is an indication when hatred is within the heart.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught that instead of an attitude that encourages one to "hate your enemy" (Matt. 5:43), the disciple of Christ should strive to "love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5:44). We note here that the conscious choice to "love" is demonstrated by acting to "bless," "do good to," and "pray for" those who not only harm you, but who themselves "hate you." This shows that just as love is shown by the behavior one demonstrates toward another, hatred is the same way. A person may irritate us, be unkind to us, or not have the personality that naturally meshes with our own disposition, but our attitude does not constitute hate unless we allow it to move us to treat them in ways that demonstrate hatred.

Hatred of Behavior vs. Hatred of the Person

In two of the letters to the seven churches in Asia, twice reference is made to the "deeds" (Rev. 2:6) or "doctrine of the Nicolaitans" (Rev. 2:15). We don't know exactly what the Nicolaitans taught and practiced, but it may have involved some false teaching that tolerated or encouraged immorality (cf. Rev. 2:14). Whatever it was we can know that it was sinful from the fact that those in Pergamos who held to it were commanded to "repent" (Rev. 2:16). In both passages referring to this we find something interesting. The Lord praised the church in Ephesus, declaring, "you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (Rev. 2:6), and after rebuking in Pergamos "those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans" He declares once again concerning this teaching "which thing I hate" (Rev. 2:15). This

is quite informative! It was not sinful for Jesus or the Ephesians to "hate" the sinful behavior and false doctrine these people practiced. We are not guilty, therefore, of the hatred that defines one as a "murderer" (1 John 3:15) if the focus of our disdain is on sinful behavior or teaching contrary to God's word. This shows that the modern charge that those who teach against the sin of homosexuality or abortion are "haters" is invalid. One may hate behavior without personally hating the souls of those who practice that behavior.

"A Time to Hate"

The Preacher taught there is, "A time to love, and a time to hate" (Eccl. 3:8). While the Holy Spirit led John to write that the one who hates is a "murderer," there are actually times in which the Lord taught that we *must* hate others. The Holy Spirit led Luke to record Jesus having taught, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26). Is this a contradiction? Does Jesus command the very thing John condemned? No. In a parallel account, the Holy Spirit led Matthew to record Jesus's words, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me