

Problems Christians Face Combating Hatred

Tonight I want to devote a few minutes to what I believe is a problem many, even among Christians, are struggling with today. It is the problem of hate. I know in recent lessons I have mentioned hateful behavior, but I want to take a deeper look at this subject from the standpoint of God's word.

One of the ways that we can describe the times we are living in is **a culture of hate**. We are BITTERLY divided politically, socially, and even religiously – and it is not just disagreeing with each other. We are witnessing incredibly bad and wicked behaviors and hearing hateful words spewed forth continually. And this behavior is far from one sided. This is wrong for many reasons, but I see as the greatest tragedy in this is 3 fold:

1) Hateful behaviors and justified and even encouraged by our society, including our leaders in many instances (Isaiah 5:20 – they call good – evil, and evil – good, Proverbs 17:15 – *He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the just, Both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord.*);

2) There is no desire for rational and open minded discussion on matters about which we differ (cf. Isaiah 1:18 calls for us come and reason together, cf. Acts 17:11). We demand that we are right and if you disagree or challenge us, we will attack and label you rather than listen.

AND 3) As Christians, do we struggle with hatred in our minds because of what we see going on around us, MAYBE even toward brethren who hold differing views than we do?

I may be powerless to change the first two in a crooked and perverse generation (at least I do not know what to do about it). But it is the 3 concern that I want to address in this lesson. I want to talk to Christians about the subject of hatred.

I. The Bible and hatred

- 1) What is hatred? It means to intensely dislike someone or something to degree that we are hostile to them or it. It is a strong fundamental emotion that affects the very fiber of who we are.
- 2) NOTE: As I begin let it be understood that there are things we ought to hate. And we could devote an entire lesson to dealing with such.
Psalm 119:104, *Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.* (also 119:128)
Revelation 2:15 -the deeds of the Nicolaitans “which thing I hate” – there are deeds that God hates
Amos 5:15 calls for us to “*Hate evil, love good;...*”; Psalm 97:10, “*You who love the LORD, hate evil!...*”
Romans 12:9 calls for us to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good.
Ephesians 5:11 tells us to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to expose them.
But that is not the focus of this lesson. Our focus is on the sin of hatred toward others and the damage it does.
- 3) Hatred toward man is a disease of the heart that divides and consumes us. It robs you of happiness and fills you with all sorts of ungodly attitudes – bitterness, envy, resentment, cursing and separation. It desires the destruction of the one toward whom it is directed and is often carried out with destructive behaviors from the destruction of one's character, to destroying property and even taking life. There is nothing good to be said about the attitude of hatred toward others.
- 4) Hatred is manifested throughout scripture. It caused Cain to murder Abel (1 John 3:12ff), Esau to plot against Jacob (Gen. 27:41), Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery and lie to their father about it (Gen. 37), David's children to plot against each other (2 Sam. 13:22), Kings to hate prophets of truth (1 Kings 22:8 – Ahab against Micaiah, also, Jezebel against Elijah) It caused Stephen to be stoned, Paul to be constantly pursued and ultimately Jesus to be crucified (cf. John 15:18ff).

In addition to this, we see nations that hated each other and the ensuing wars and animosity. In NT times, the Jews hated the Samaritans so much that they went out of their way to avoid their territory. We see in each of these examples and others the destructive nature of hatred.

- 5) What does the Bible say about hatred?
 - a. Titus 3:3 – it is characteristic of the lost.
 - b. Galatians 5:19-21 – a work of the flesh
 - c. 1 John 2:9-11 tells us that if you hate your brother you are walking in darkness. NOTE: Who is your brother? While contextually we could say fellow Christians, I believe it goes further than this. Just as Jesus told the lawyer that your neighbor is ANYONE you have opportunity to help (Luke 10:25-37 – leading to the parable of the good Samaritan), so there is a sense in which anyone is our brother (we are all of one blood – Acts 17:26).
Jesus actually emphasized this in Matthew 5:43-45.
 - d. 1 John 3:15, *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.*
 - e. 1 John 4:20-21 again uses strong language dealing with whoever says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar.
 - f. Proverbs 10:12, *Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.*

II. Thought concerning hatred

- 1) Hatred is a learned behavior- we are not born as haters. Little children will play with each other without malice. People hate because of environmental influences – the way they are raised, things that happen to them, etc.
- 2) The hater suffers more often than the hated. It will rob you of happiness and can enslave or consume you. If one is bitter or envious toward others, they cannot have joy.
This is seen in King Saul's hatred of David, the degree to which the enemies of Jesus were willing to go, the Jews hatred of Paul and Stephen, etc.
- 3) Hatred often leads to destructive consequences – not only do they damage those they hate, often times it comes back and destroys them. One who murders another in hate and anger usually loses his freedom; bitterness often causes rash decisions and actions that result in all sorts of personal damage – both physically and to one's reputation.
- 4) Hatred has eternal consequences – Again Galatians 5:21 – those who practice such things will NOT inherit the kingdom of God. Also 1 John 3:15 again – no murderer (in context of hatred) has eternal life abiding in him.
- 5) Don't confuse human hatred with God's wrath, or the hatred of sin - I say this to those who justify wicked behaviors in the name of God or religion. Your cause may be just (anti-abortion, condemning homosexuality, hating idolatry, etc.), but that does not give you the right to do hateful things, destroy that which belongs to other or to break the law.
Much terrorism in the world today is done in name of God (and actually blasphemes God and His name). God's wrath is the outcome of His holiness. Romans 12:17-20, James 1:19-20 – the wrath of man does NOT produce the righteousness of God.

III. Combating hatred

- 1) **Don't be a part of it** – Ephesians 5:11 – have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. NEVER defend hateful behavior or the hatred of others. Many organizations and causes today that are good within themselves, but they have lost credibility because of their endorsement of OR refusal to condemn hatred in hearts and actions. DON'T endorse or defend such behaviors!
- 2) **Instead, be everything a Christian is supposed to be** – let your light shine (Matthew 5:16), especially in this dark world (Philippians 2:14-15 – Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may

become blameless and harmless..) Matthew 5:44 – He said to do good to those who hate you. Romans 12:17-18 also calls for us to do this. In so doing, you will be part of the solution rather than the problem.

- 3) **QUIT LISTENING TO those who promote hate!** Does the news anger you? Does social media anger you? Does watching the sensationalization and even justification of wicked behavior bring out emotions that tend toward hatred? You better deal with it! If need be, cut it off.
- 4) **Love is the answer** – this is the answer! True Christian love removes hate. Remember how it is described in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. You cannot say you love someone and hate them at the same time.
- 5) **Follow the example of Jesus in responding to hatred.-**
Follow His teachings! He taught us to love our enemies and everyone. Matthew 5:43-45
He set the example and dies for us – 1 Peter 2:21-24.
- 6) **Pray for your enemies** – again Matthew 5:43. Also remember Jesus on the cross as He prayed, Luke 23:34. Also pray for yourself as you deal with hatred around you.
- 7) **Develop the Christian attitudes that will push out attitudes and feelings of hatred** – Compassion, Longsuffering, patience, mercy and grace. Remember again God’s grace toward us and let that govern our grace toward others. Matthew 5:48 – therefore you shall be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.
- 8) **Learn to forgive even as God does** – this is crucial as how God views us depends upon how we view others (Matthew 6:14-15). Are we willing to forgive? Do we have the attitude that lends toward forgiveness?
- 9) **Seek to understand** - this is NOT justification of hateful behaviors but taking time to try and understand motives behind actions can in many instances cause you to change your perspective. We know this to be true in so many things. NOW, in so doing you find that pure hatred is still there, but at least you are not responding in ignorance.

There are other things we could add to these, but it is my goal in this lesson to remind each of us as Christians (myself included) that hatred is NOT the way of God and thus not the way of a Christian. In fact, it is the very opposite of what God wants you to be? Are you struggling with this? If so, how can we help you? Think about it!