

“Does God Hate Me?”

Part 1: What is Hate? What is Love?

(preached 6/23/24)

Please turn to *Matthew 5:21*.

The Lord impressed this sermon upon me because there are too many people who *believe God hates them*.

What a horrible way to live and my heart goes out to ANYONE suffering under this belief! *Can you imagine....*

- Believing that He Who Created all hates you?
- Would that inspire hope or despair?
- Despair to the point of wrestling with suicidal thoughts & feelings?
- How would a person like this respond to a call to repent?
- Might that inspire someone to turn to atheism and/or embracing a lifestyle that God calls sin?
- Figuring they might as well do what they want because they're just going to Hell anyway?
- Could it lead someone to reimagine God into something else that's more likeable and tolerant?
- Perhaps leading them to a church that does the same?
- Might they feel completely helpless to “do” anything about their belief that God hates them?
- That they can't do enough good to change God's mind?

In today's sermon I'm addressing two audiences. Most sermons are directed at us: the Church. Yet in today's message I'm also talking to anyone who believes that God hates them.

My fellow Christians, **OUR RELIGIOUS SAYINGS AREN'T HELPING.** We try and say things like “*God loves the sinner, but hates the sin*” but is that really convincing anyone suffering under this condemnation to change their hearts?

We've tried saying it in other ways: “I like you, I just don't like the choices you make or the lifestyle you live” but that isn't working either even if we mean it.

Let's start out by **giving a Biblical definition of hate**...and it might not be what we think it is. We Christians must adjust what we believe about it first before we can minister to someone else. ***We may be indulging in hate more than we think.*** First let's clarify what it's NOT:

- Hate is not hot anger: that's rage.
- Rage can be the RESULT of hate, but it's not hate itself.
- Hate isn't wishing "karma" (revenge) upon someone.
- Wishing that someone would "get what's coming to them" is an expression of hate, but it's not the source.

Let's start by listening to the words of our Lord and Savior Jesus:

[Mat 5:21-24 NKJV] 21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' 22 **"But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.** 23 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

And then let's listen to John:

[1Jo 3:13-15 NKJV] 13 Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love [his] brother abides in death. 15 **Whoever hates his brother is a murderer,** and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

I repeat: hatred is not rage or a desire for revenge. Hate isn't an emotion or feeling.

Hate is when we cut off love.

When we cut off love, we're attempting to cut off God Himself from our object of hate.

Allow me to give some examples:

- Imagine someone who wanted to come to Gateway but a member of the church who has issues with said person, literally bars the door to prevent them from entering.
- Picture someone suffering under crushing guilt but, because we don't like their lifestyle, we decide to deny them prayer, compassion, and the Gospel.
- Someone in the church is having major financial problems and asks for help to put food on the table. Yet brother Johnny Doe decides not to because he's angry at this person.

Jesus and John told us the world hates us because **THE WORLD DOESN'T HAVE GOD**...therefore it's **not capable of God's love.** It's only able to hate.

A Christian is different because **Love Himself—in the form of the Holy Spirit—has come to live inside of us** and make us His Temple.

GOD, WHO IS LOVE, IS WITH THE BELIEVER ALL THE TIME.

Self-focused Christianity is primarily wanting and needing to be on the **RECEIVING** end of God. Desiring God to mostly give His love, joy, peace, help, and wisdom to us.

What God has called upon us to do is to have Him flow THROUGH us, like rivers of living water, and splash God all over others.

Hatred is when we refuse to do that.

Love is when we let God flow.

Emotions, whether good or bad, are the result of either.

- We will experience peace and joy as a result of the Holy Spirit flowing through us.
- We'll desire revenge or feel anger when we've cut someone off.
- We can also experience no-emotion coldness toward someone we've cut off.

THIS IS WHY JESUS AND JOHN BOTH EQUATE HATRED TO MURDER. God is life and anyone who doesn't yet know Him as Savior is dead and there is no Light in them. That included us before we came to Christ's Saving Grace.

A person who comes to Jesus is given what the Lord promised: **abundant life everlasting.** They're filled with His Light, His Word, and His covenant.

TO CUT ANOTHER PERSON OFF FROM GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US IS TO MURDER THEM.

We love to pick on the Pharisees of Jesus day, wondering how they could be so blind and obstinate. Look at the hatred flowing through them like the dark side of the force and pay attention to the result:

[Mat 23:13-15 NKJV] 13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ***you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in [yourselves], nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.*** 14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. 15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, **you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.**"

The Pharisees did not have God and were dead inside... **Jesus actually called them well-dressed zombies** (whitewashed tombs with dead men's bones inside). The metaphorical picture Jesus is drawing here is the people *wanting to enter into God's Kingdom and the Pharisees blocking the way.*

The Pharisees should have been the people full of God and His Word, shepherding the people into God's Kingdom. Yet their demand to others to follow all of the Law—including the ones they created—barred people from approaching God. Then when they recruited a disciple, they trained him to be exactly the same way.

Are we wielding God's Law—and the ones we've created—as the primary weapon against unbelievers?

Are we responding to their hatred with hatred of our own?

Let me say it another way: **THERE ARE PLENTY OF UNBELIEVERS WHO HAVE ALREADY VILIFIED US CHRISTIANS.** They say that we're outdated, bigots, intolerant, science deniers, and much more. They blaspheme God, the Church, and the Bible. They make false accusations, attempt to shut our businesses down, and destroy our reputations.

Are we responding by punching them back?

- Do we feel anger, even rage, toward them?
- Is there part of us that wishes “karma” would nail them?
- Have we decided there’s no saving them because they’re too far gone?
- Do we bother to pray for them and share the Good News with them?

WHICH PARTY HAS GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT: BELIEVERS OR UNBELIEVERS?

“But Scott, you just read that Jesus punched the Pharisees and Scribes in the face!”

Yes He did...but He never did that to the people, even when they tried to kill Him and eventually did.

He only **punched the group God had assigned to the Shepherds** and Light of Israel, but were being the opposite.

There are *plenty of unbelieving conservatives and liberals* and they hate each other plenty. They spend lots of time punching each other.

So who is called upon to love?

And to respond with hatred with love?

I remind us all:

The Biblical definition of hate is to cut someone off from God the Holy Spirit inside us.

THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF LOVE IS TO ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US TO FLOW THROUGH US TO OTHERS.

Especially to those who are being crushed under the rubble of believing God hates them.

ARE THERE TIMES WHEN WE NEED TO DISTANCE OURSELVES FROM SOMEONE?

Yes. Even the Apostle Paul put some distance between himself and Barnabas for a while because they had a falling out. And when it comes to family, even Jesus wasn't able to be a prophet within His own village. So yes: there are times when some space is necessary.

That being said, my fellow believers, **we should spend that time with the Lord in prayer** asking Him to examine US and reveal how we might be adding to the toxicity of a fallen relationship and how we can repent.

[SWITCH AUDIENCE]

If you're someone who thinks God hates you, please listen to these verses.

Before I read them, please understand *Paul is talking to BELIEVERS and how they're to treat unbelievers:*

[Rom 12:17-21 NKJV] 17 **Repay no one evil for evil.** Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but [rather] give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance [is] Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore ***"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."*** 21 ***Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.***

I'm still speaking to anyone who thinks God hates them. The Lord is commanding those who believe in Him *to be good to you even if you're not good to them.*

God is saying that because He wants to show you that He loves you through His Church and not despite it.

- He's trying to tell you that even though you have been defying Him and are living in a way that He doesn't approve of, **He wants you anyway.**
- He wants you to have a relationship with Him and to be your Dad.
- He wants you to enter into His Heavenly Kingdom.
- He's NOT trying to keep you out.
- He loves you.

If He hated you, He would cut you off from His presence. He would never make Himself available to you. He would tell His followers to hate you too, persecute you, reject you, and decide you weren't worth saving. He would bar the gate to His Kingdom.

I'M SORRY FOR ANY OF US FOLLOWERS WHO HAVE DONE ONE OR MORE OF THOSE THINGS: you can see from this sermon that we're trying to change that. It's not God's will for Christians to cut you off.

What He desires to do is forgive and transform us...all of us.

He does not affirm anything that He calls sin in His Bible. Yet He doesn't just leave us in our weaknesses to figure it out and suffer. He gives us the supernatural transformative power of His Holy Spirit so that we can believe and live holy and joyful lives, free from the enslavement of sin.

I'm pleading with you to hear the Gospel from a Christian willing to share it with you. I'm asking you to believe that is for you and not against you. That the gates of Heaven are open to ANYONE who receives His Son Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

NOW I'M SPEAKING TO THE CHURCH: we need to ask ourselves if indeed, we've indulged in God's definition of hate: *to cut someone off from the Holy Spirit within us*. It's time to truly believe and live what we tell unbelievers all the time: **to love the sinner despite how they might be living or choosing.**

To let God the Holy Spirit splash all over them and get them wet.

This is not us condoning anything God calls sin in His Word—we should never do that.

This is not us affirming an identity that someone has taken on themselves when we know that our true identity is in Christ and not ourselves.

Instead of deciding that this person or group is without hope and lost forever, let's pray for their Salvation.

Instead of cutting someone off who blasphemes God and the Church, let the compassion of the Holy Spirit and the hope of the Gospel flow through us.