

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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"Hate the Sin, But Love the Sinner"

By Daniel Stearsman

Is it not wonderful to reflect on the abundant love and mercy of God? His riches are a continual outpouring of compassion. His longsuffering and forgiveness blossom into eternal bliss when washed robes enter His heavenly presence. Truly we serve an awesome God! Yet frankly, there is a side of God that is quite troubling. It is His severity, an aspect of His nature that should make us tremble with fear (cf. Isa. 33:14; Acts 24:25; Rom. 11:22). While God is the God of ultimate goodness, God also is a consuming fire administering judgment and fiery fury (Heb. 10:27).

Perhaps we have heard someone say, "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner." Many of us have heard it and probably said it. There are elements of truth in both phrases. God certainly does hate sin and definitely loves sinners (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 5:8). However, does the statement leave too much unstated? In our attempt at generalizing or summarizing, in our attempt to make an element of the Gospel short and sweet, have we left too much unsaid? Only the full context of such a statement could bear a full answer, but the point is—are we leaving unsaid crucial truths that should make us shudder uncomfortably, drop what we are doing, run to God, beg for mercy, and pant for his cleansing blood?

The Depths of Status Change: Transforming Identity and Nature

When we do something wrong before God, we make a crucial pivot from holy to unholy, purity to impurity, from righteousness to unrighteousness, and from grace to wrath. We err. Sin is what *we do*

and a sinner is what *we become*. It is not just *actions* that are under consideration, but *actors*. We must realize that sometimes sin is spoken of objectively or abstractly, but sin always occurs personally and bodily (Mt. 5:29-30; Rom. 6:6). When we sin, our identity, nature, and destiny are forever changed, except for the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:3). The responsibility and accountability lay squarely at our feet as God attributes our actions to us. We have fallen from grace and the production of death begins (Gal. 5:4; Rom. 7:3). Guilt and death overtake us (Jas. 1:15). Sin's dominant power reigns over us and slaves we become (Rom. 3:9; Jn. 8:34). When we pivot, so does heaven (Nah. 1:2; 2 Thes. 1:8). Without divine help, our inner self will not stop wasting away, in this life or the next (2 Cor. 4:16).

God is clear on the extremity of his distaste for certain *actions* and *actors* alike.

The LORD tests the righteous, but *his soul hates the wicked* and the one who loves violence. (Ps. 11:5, ESV, emphasis added, DS)

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; *you hate all evildoers*. ⁶You destroy those who speak lies; *the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man*. (Ps. 5:5-6, emphasis added, DS)

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers. (Pr. 6:16-19)

God not only hates *actions* and *inactions*, but the eyes, the tongue, the hands, the feet, and yes, the


persons—the false witness and the one who sows discord. Thankfully, our merciful and ever loving God was not content to leave us spiraling away from Him. Enter—the Gospel.

Generally: Love “And” Hate; Particularly: Love “Or” Hate

In the same moment John the Baptizer proclaimed, “all flesh shall see the salvation of God,” he also proclaimed “wrath to come” (Lk. 3:6-7). The nature of God is such that He both loves and hates. Generally, His love does not always exclude hate in some contradictory fashion. Further, neither does His hate always exclude love. His balance here is mind blowing. Our souls should ever seek to love what He loves and hate what He hates (Ps. 139:21-22; 1 Jn. 2:9, 11; 4:20). Solomon said there is “a time to love, and a time to hate” (Eccl. 3:8). God surely loves the world even when the world’s earthly father is the devil (Jn. 3:16, 8:44). What is the point? Love and hate are not always mutually exclusive with God. However, in sharp contrast, towards particular and specific actions God loves *or* hates. That is, any particular *act* is an object of God’s love *or* hate.

Conclusion

Let us be careful not to leave too much unsaid when we say, “God hates the sin, but loves the sinner.” Too much is at stake. Sure God hates sin, but does God hate

the sinner too? God’s firm diagnosis is yes. The greatest news of the Gospel illuminates from this dastardly diagnosis of sin. God’s prescription has blood all over it—“while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Let us speak up—sin is so much more than a light dusting on a fine antique; sin completely ravages us! Sin first changes our nature and God was, and is, not content leaving us there. Through Christ, the love of heaven rolls out the bloody red carpet and extends that grand invitation to come and drink freely of the waters of life (Jn. 4:14; Rev. 21:6). The good news is that God invites all men to come and partake of His divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). May the embers in our souls burn stronger than ever. Let us spurn his grace no longer (Heb. 10:29-31). Graft us in the Lord (Rom. 11:21-25)! Renew the spirit of our minds (Eph. 4:19-24)! This pivot is surely the delight of heaven (Lk. 15:7, 10). 

Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22a)

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THE DEPENDABLE LORD

By Brian R. Kenyon

Sometimes God's people lose focus and begin to wonder whether God is really there for them. Such would be the case when Judah would go into captivity. In Isaiah 40, the prophet gives a glimmer of hope to God's people concerning the time when they would come out of the captivity that, in the future from Isaiah's time, would be brought upon them because of their rebellion against God. The passage under consideration in this article also gives hope to God's people today by giving three reasons why the Lord can be trusted to deliver.

HE IS CONCERNED

Why do you say, O Jacob, And speak, O Israel: "My way is hidden from the LORD, And my just claim is passed over by my God"? (Isa. 40:27, NKJ)

The future exiles will think that the Lord will be unaware of their plight (cf. Isa. 49:4). They will have become discouraged because they could see no evidence of God's deliverance (cf. Isa. 40:2, 9-11). God's people, pictured as "Jacob," were worthy of death, but God spared them (Mal. 3:6). God reminds Jacob's ancestors what he told Jacob about returning to his homeland (cf. Gen. 31:13). The term translated "just claim [judgement, KJV; justice due, NAS]" was a legal term, referring to "that to which a person is entitled" (cf. Isa. 40:2). The point is that the Lord cares about His people (cf. Mt. 6:25-33). Sometimes, God's people today can likewise lose focus and be discouraged, but let us always remember that "He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7).

HE IS IN CONTROL

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable. 29 He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. (Isa. 40:28-29 cf. 2 Sam. 22:32-33; 1 Chr. 29:12-13; Ps. 73:26)

It is impossible to completely fathom God's "understanding." Paul declared, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). He who is of such great power as to hold up the stars (Isa. 40:26), also supports His weary people. The Lord is certainly strong enough and in enough control to help His people. God has promised, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God

is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10:13 cf. Phil. 4:13)! We need not doubt His control!

HE WILL LIFT HIS PEOPLE

Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint. (Isa. 40:30-31)

The Lord will lift those who trust Him over all their obstacles! Even the strongest of men ("youths . . . young men") grow weary (Isa. 40:30), but those who tap into God's everlasting strength will overcome (Isa. 40:31). To "wait on the Lord" means to let God lead and fully rely upon Him (cf. Isa. 8:17; 30:18; 49:23; Ps. 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14; 37:7, 9, 34; Hos. 12:6). The word translated "renew [gain new, NAS]" is a rare word that was first thought to refer to the growth of new feathers on the eagle after molting; then, took the meaning of the soaring, sweeping flight of the eagle. The Lord gives His people strength to "mount up with wings like eagles." The words "mount up...run...walk" form a climax, showing the constant strength the Lord provides His people to live faithfully! God exalts all who trust in Him (cf. Isa. 58:14; Hab. 3:19; Ps. 92:12; Pr. 4:18).

CONCLUSION

The Lord will still lift up His people when they trust in Him. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (Jas. 4:10)! We can depend on the dependability of the Lord!

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