

The Love God Hates

1 John 2:12–17

The statement “The Love God Hates” strikes some people at their core. How could a loving God hate anything or anyone? “God is love” is a theme that I will cover in this series of messages from 1 John (1 John 4:8). What contradiction—what inconsistency—to say that a God *who is love* expresses hate. Yes, God hates! The Bible list several things *or* acts that God hates. God hates . . .

- Homosexual acts (Leviticus 18:22)
- Bestiality (Leviticus 18:23)
- Idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:25)
- Dishonest business dealings (Deuteronomy 25:13–16)
- The actions of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6)
- Lying (Zechariah 8:17)
- Evil (Amos 5:15)

I found one resource that listed forty-five things found in Scripture that God hates.¹ Not every reference uses the word hate, but they use words that are synonymous, such as “detest” or “abominations.” The fact that God hates these things is not hypocritical or inconsistent. It is spot-on with His character. A God of love must hate certain things. In fact, He could not be a God of love unless He hated certain things.

I love my children and, because of that love, I must hate anything that puts them in danger. My love for them forces me to hate child abuse and child neglect. I love my wife and therefore, to be consistent with that love, I must hate any and every thing that threatens her. I love this church, so I am commanded to hate any teaching that could harm the church. God’s love for truth means He hates evil. God’s love for His own glory forces Him to hate the evil which attempts to rob Him of His glory.

God even hates some people. Could that be consistent with His character as well? I mean, the Bible says we are to love the sinner and hate the sin, right? No! Actually, Mahatma Gandhi

¹ Living the Way, “At Least 43 Things God Hates,” accessed March 28, 2016, <http://livingtheway.org/43things.html>.

said that, not Jesus.

- Psalm 5:5–6 says, “The boastful shall not stand before your eyes; you hate all evildoers. You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.”
- Proverbs 16:5 says, “Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished.”
- Malachi 1:2–3 says, “...Yet, I have loved Jacob, and I have hated Esau.”

In God, we see perfect love mingled with perfect hate. Hate can be perfect, pure, clean, wholesome, and unsullied because it comes from God.

Transition: Not only does God hate certain things, but you should hate certain things. Psalm 97:10 says, “O you who love the LORD, hate evil!” Psalm 119:104 reiterates this truth: “Through your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.” Your love for truth causes you to hate evil. As we consider the subject of “The Love God Hates” we locate two truths in the text that lead us to a clearer understanding. Here is the first:

1. As you mature in Christ, you hate what God hates (1 John 2:12–14).

1 John 2:12–14 says,

I write to you, **little children**, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, **fathers**, Because you have known Him [who is] from the beginning. I write to you, **young men**, Because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, **little children**, Because you have known the Father. I have written to you, **fathers**, Because you have known Him [who is] from the beginning. I have written to you, **young men**, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

I am not saying this is easy to understand, but I am saying that as we grow in Christ we can arrive at a better understanding of this truth. Not everyone receives this truth with the same level of spiritual maturity. That is why, before God releases the truth, He reveals three stages of spiritual maturity.

Notice the three different levels: children, young men, and fathers (verses 12–13). They are repeated again for emphasis. Growth spiritually can mirror growth physically. If there is life, there will be growth. When growth does not happen, it breaks the laws of nature. It is often sad. Retardation that prevents physical or mental growth is sad and upsetting. Spiritual retardation is just as devastating.

This spiritual growth characterized by the three categories of **children, the young and strong, and the fathers** is an opportunity and an expectation. We often call this spiritual growth *sanctification*.

This process (spiritual maturity / sanctification) has nothing to do with the . . .

- **Amount of time** you have been saved. You could have been saved for a short time and have progressed through the child stage into the young and strong stage. You could also have been saved for thirty-five years and still be in the child stage. The Scripture speaks about people who should have progressed to become teachers, but they haven't (Hebrews 5:12).²
- **Degree** of God's love for you. God loves you to the same degree whether you have progressed as you should or not.
- **Influence** of the person. Some pastors have a huge ministry numerically, and constantly and consistently with their behavior show they are still spiritual children. I heard one well-respected pastor say that some of the largest ministries in America are led by men who are spiritually immature. Just because one adult Bible class is bigger than the other does not mean it is led by someone who is more spiritually mature.
- **Success** of a person. It does not matter how big your house is or how big your paycheck is. That does not equate to spiritual progress.
- **Position** in the church. "Well, I have a lot of influence in this church. I have a high position in this church." That just means you are accountable for more, not that you are more spiritual. Sadly, some of the people in the church with the highest positions and the biggest influence are often the most spiritually immature.³

Let's look briefly at these three categories.

Children (verses 12–13) – What characterizes children? They are cute, but they are very self-consumed. They are needy. They need attention from everyone. They are marked by jealousy, strife, and immaturity. These are people that will make comments like this: "I am going

² I realize this text is likely speaking of unsaved people, but the truth of time leading to progress remains the same.

³ This was adapted from an audio sermon by John MacArthur entitled "The Love God Hates." John MacArthur, "The Love God Hates," recorded October 20, 2002, streaming audio, accessed March 28, 2016, <http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/62-15/the-love-god-hates>.

to throw my weight around (at home or job) and make sure I get my way.” They are saved, but spiritually childish.⁴

Young and Strong (verses 13–14) – They are strong—winning spiritual victories, making progress in their spiritual journey. They are growing, and everyone can see it. Notice that their growth is directly connected to the Word of God (verse 14). You are not strong outside of a consistent time in the Scriptures.

This group is strong in their doctrine. When they encounter heresy, they want to confront it head-on. You see, the children are vulnerable to false doctrine. They have very little reference point to judge what they hear. They hear the prosperity gospel, or legalism, or licentiousness, and they say, “I will swallow all that.” The young and strong see the heresy or the imbalance or the overemphasis. They want to study it out. They always want to start something and go forward.

Fathers – These people are not only theologically strong, but spiritually strong. They know what it means to walk with God. They live a life of worship. They have an intimate relationship with God. They are described two times by the same introduction, “Fathers, you KNOW him.” That is a really good description. They know God.

Transition: When you increase in spiritual maturity, you sin less but hate sin more. As you mature, you hate what God hates and . . .

2. As you mature in Christ, you see what God hates (1 John 2:15–17).

1 John 2:15–17 continues,

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that [is] in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

We do not want to be guilty of hating what God loves in the world or loving what God hates in the world. As you mature in Christ, you will see what God hates.

What are you supposed to hate? We are to hate the world. But what world? There is a nature/cosmos world (Psalm 24:1). God created this: the trees, grass, mountains, oceans, and animals. We are not to hate this world (neither should we worship it), but we should enjoy it and have dominion over it. It is a reflection of its Creator God.

⁴ I realize the words used for *children* in verses 12 and 13 are different.

What about the world of mankind? We all know John 3:16 and the great price God paid because of His love for this world. I have heard one of my mentors make a striking but true statement: “God killed His Son so He would not have to kill you.” You may argue that the officials killed Him (yes) or that the soldiers killed Him (yes), but never forget that it pleased the Father to bruise Him (Isaiah 53:10). If God loved the world of mankind, we ought to love it too. We are to love this world of people and the world of nature.

We are to hate the world in the sense of Satan’s system that opposes the work of Christ on this earth.⁵ Satan’s worldview permeates the media, the leadership, and the philosophy of our world.

We find three things in the text about “Satan’s world” that we are to hate:

1) The desires of the flesh – These are not bad unless they are used in the bad way. Here they are used in a bad way. It is natural for us to eat, drink, and sleep, but when we turn these things to an unnatural use they become sins. Cravings are not a sin as long as you crave what is yours and what is holy.

We often blame Satan for something our flesh chose to do. If we sin or see someone else sin, we say, “Well, the devil got him.” We must remember the devil is not omnipresent. He can only be at one place at a time. He is typically in deceptions of false doctrine or religion. Do not blame Satan for something your flesh is guilty of.

The first two things about “Satan’s world” are not synonymous, but they are very similar.

2) The desires of the eyes – Eyes have an appetite. They eat more than your mouth. Have you ever heard the phrase, “Feast your eyes on this”?⁶ The eyes are the gateway to the heart. Watch what you let through that gate. Anything that will turn your heart away from God or the things of God like prayer, Bible reading, and the church should be marked as anti-God.

3) The pride of life – The word *pride* in the Greek speaks of someone who exaggerates what he possesses in order to impress others.⁷ Warren Wiersbe summarizes loving the world through

⁵ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Real: Turning from Hypocrisy to Truth* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 1972), 70.

⁶ Wiersbe, *Be Real*, 74.

⁷ Cleon L. Rogers Jr. and Cleon L. Rogers III, *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 594.

pride well. He says,

Why is it that so many folks buy houses, cars, appliances, or wardrobes that they really can't afford? Why do they succumb to the "travel now, pay later" advertising and get themselves into hopeless debt taking vacations far beyond their means? Largely because they want to impress other people—because of their "pride of life." They want people to notice how affluent and successful they are.

Wiersbe continues his pointed application in our direction when he says, "Among Christians, worldliness rears its ugly head in many subtle and unrecognized forms. Sometimes we tend to idolize great athletes, TV stars, or political leaders who profess to be Christians"

Conclusion

I am going to close with this: Do you remember Demas? Akin writes,

We first hear of him in Colossians 4:14 where he is working hard for the gospel alongside Luke. He is listed along with nearly 10 others for their faithful service to Christ (Col. 4:7-18). We do not hear of him again until 2 Timothy 4:10, toward the end of Paul's last letter as he anticipates his execution and martyrdom for Christ. There we simply read, "For Demas, in love with this present world, has deserted me . . ." The NLT says it like this, "Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life." You can almost feel Paul's heart break as he pens these words.⁸

⁸ Daniel Akin, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2014), 45.

This chart is something I gave the congregation to take home with them and pray through this week. I found it in Daniel Akin's commentary.



In the book *Embracing Obscurity* (p.87), a beautiful contrast is drawn between *the things of the world* and *the things of the Father*. Daniel Akin makes only a few slight adjustments and additions. The differences between the two could not be more striking.

Things of the World	Things of the Father
The focus is on me.	The focus is on God.
Make as much money as possible.	Give as much money away as possible, and spend even yourself on others.
Live comfortably.	Life is not about comfort, but about doing hard things now so that we can reap rewards in the life to come.
Make a name for yourself.	Make His name great.
Do whatever makes you happiest.	Do whatever makes God happiest.
Teach your children to love themselves and seek self-fulfillment.	Teach your children to love and obey God. ("Behaving" is often, but not always, a blessed by-product.)
Look like a model in a magazine and turn your physical appearance into an idol.	Treat your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and cultivate an inner beauty.

Offer “acts of service” when you feel like it (on your terms).	Be a servant, even when it is uncomfortable or inconvenient.
Stay married as long as your spouse meets your needs.	Serve your spouse (the way Christ modeled servanthood), and choose to love him or her for life.
Come across as powerful, influential, and/or interesting.	Give preference to others in words and actions.
Use (worldly) wisdom to accrue wealth.	Value true wisdom (which is the fear of God) over all the treasures on earth.
Stay up to date with the fashions.	Be content just to have clothes.
They are passing away.	They will abide forever.
I do the will of the world.	I do the will of the Father.

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