

Love/Hate
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Today I received the following email devotion from the "Love Worth Finding" ministry of Adrian Rogers who is a well-known Baptist pastor and Southern Baptist Convention leader. I have been following his teachings for a long time and respect him a great deal. I am now of the Reformed Theology so there are some concepts upon which we disagree, but none of them are major items that would keep us from having Christian fellowship as brothers in Christ. I think that his topic for today is extremely important and so I wanted to amplify upon it a bit.

Here is what was emailed to me for this day's devotional:

BIBLE MEDITATION: "Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of His saints; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked." Psalm 97:10

DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT: "This may come as a surprise to you, but because you are a Christian doesn't mean you are supposed to love everything. Now, we hear that Christians are to be a people of love, and that is true. But, did you know that if you're a Christian, not only must you learn to love, but you also must learn to hate? If you love God, then you are to hate what God hates. It is true in every realm. If you love flowers, you hate weeds. If you love health, you hate germs. If you love God, you hate evil. It is just that plain. Romans 12:9b tells us in even stronger terms to "abhor that which is evil." A hypocrite, which is something none of us want to be, is someone who says he loves God, but then he doesn't hate sin. Don't tell others you love God if you don't hate that which nailed Him upon the cross."¹

I think that many Christians have problems with what we are to love and what we are to hate. Probably most serious Christians would think that we should not hate anything as Dr. Rogers says above. But we are supposed to be becoming more and more God-like as we mature in the Christian faith and part of what that means is that we should love what God loves and hate what God hates. From the above, we know that we should hate evil. However this verse is just a piece of the Word of God and requires that we must study the concept of Love/Hate a lot more.

The word "hate" appears 90 times in the entire Bible and the word "love" appears 312 times in the entire Bible. When we look at the combination of love and hate, we find the combination occurs 20 times in the entire Bible. Here are all of the combination verses:

Judges 14:16 And Samson's wife wept before him and said, "You only hate me, and you do not love me; you have propounded a riddle to the sons of my people, and have not told it to me." And he said to her, "Behold, I have not told it to my father or mother; so should I tell you?"

2Sam 19:6 by loving those who hate you, and by hating those who love you. For you have shown today that princes and servants are nothing to you; for I know this day that if Absalom were alive and all of us were dead today, then you would be pleased.

2Chronicles 19:2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord and so bring wrath on yourself from the Lord?"

Psa 97:10 Hate evil, you who love the Lord, Who preserves the souls of His godly ones; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.

Psa 119:113 I hate those who are double-minded, But I love Thy law.

Psa 119:163 I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Thy law.

Proverbs 1:22 "How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, And fools hate knowledge?"

Proverbs 8:36 "But he who sins against me injures himself; All those who hate me love death."

Proverbs 9:8 Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you, Reprove a wise man, and he will love you.

Ecc 3:8 A time to love, and a time to hate; A time for war, and a time for peace.

Ecc 9:6 Indeed their love, their hate, and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun.

Isa 61:8 For I, the Lord, love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering; And I will faithfully give them their recompense, And I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Hos 9:15 All their evil is at Gilgal; Indeed, I came to hate them there! Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house! I will love them no more; All their princes are rebels.

Amos 5:15 Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the Lord God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Micah 3:2 "You who hate good and love evil, Who tear off their skin from them And their flesh from their bones,

Zec 8:17 'Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,' declares the Lord. "

Matt 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'

Matt 6:24 "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Luke 6:27 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

We see in several situations above that there is hate for people and not just hate for actions or things. If we just read Matt 5:43, we might say that we are to hate our enemies. However whenever Jesus is quoted as saying "you have heard", it means that they have heard the teaching of the Pharisees to say that to which He is referring. Such a phrase is always followed by a true teaching of Jesus and we are to not pay attention to that "which we have heard". In this case we need to put this verse in context by reading the entire section:

Matt 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.'

Matt 5:44 But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you

Matt 5:45 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matt 5:46 For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?

Matt 5:47 And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Matt 5:48 Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

So now are we to "hate the sin but love the sinner" as we have heard many people say? From combining the above quotations of Matt 5:43-48 and Psa 97:10, it certainly seems so. It is extremely important to see what Greek word is used for "love" in Matt 5:44. The word is "agape" and this is the love that only God can exhibit. This love is a love that reaches out to people regardless of what they have done for us. It is not "philadelphia", which would mean that we treat them as our brothers and sisters. This type of love is the type of love that should be the goal of every Christian to have toward those who hate us, but it is not a typical reactionary love of humans toward our enemies. We are to forgive them instantly (something for another paper!),

pray for them, and we are to help them in any way that we can. Only the Christian who has God working within them is capable of even achieving a little bit of this type of love. Still, it is a command from our Lord that we should have this God-love for those who persecute us.

[As an aside, look at the following verse which condemns many followers of God who do not devote themselves to a deep study of the Word of God.

Proverbs 1:22 "How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing, And fools hate knowledge?"]

So let's delve a bit deeper. Look at these combinations, which all talk about hating sin AND the sinners.

Psa 119:128 "Therefore I esteem right all Thy precepts concerning everything, I hate every false way."

Psa 119:163 "I hate and despise falsehood, But I love Thy law."

Psa 139:2 "Do I not hate those who hate Thee, O Lord? And do I not loathe those who rise up against Thee?"

Psa 139:22 "I hate them with the utmost hatred; They have become my enemies."

Hosea 9:15 "All their evil is at Gilgal; Indeed, I came to hate them there! Because of the wickedness of their deeds I will drive them out of My house! I will love them no more; All their princes are rebels."

Mal 2:16 "For I hate divorce," says the Lord, the God of Israel, "and him who covers his garment with wrong," says the Lord of hosts. "So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Now here is another verse about hating people that has caused people some trouble:

Luke 14:26 "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

So what does this verse mean? Are we to really hate our father and mother and wife, etc. and thus break Ten Commandments and other Scripture about how to treat our wife and family? Now perhaps we are really getting somewhere in this study for we know that we are to love and honor our mother and father and we are to love our wives as Christ loved the Church (Eph 5:25-27). The Greek word for hate here is "miseo" and it is the same Greek word that is used in Matt 5:43 and it is the same Greek word that is used when God says that He hated Esau (Rom 9:13).

Then what we have as a problem is a problem in the meaning of this word. A Greek/English Dictionary² translates the word as detest or hate and this does not help much! Looking in an English dictionary we find two meanings of the word "hate". We normally think about the first definition of the word "hate", which is "to feel hostility or animosity toward". However the second meaning of the word is "to feel dislike or distaste for: *hates washing dishes*". If I say that I hate washing dishes, it does not mean that I have a strong emotional intensity toward washing dishes, it just means that I would much rather be doing something else. I could also say that I hate this shirt and that also means that I would rather not wear that particular shirt and it does not mean that I am going to destroy it. I could say that I hate my car and that again would mean that I would rather have another car. Regarding my car, I could also say that I love my car and that would be wrong for I, as a Christian, am not supposed to love any material object.

So let's think about what Jesus means in Luke 14:26 in light of the rest of Scripture and the second meaning of the word "hate" given above. My enemies I can love ("agape") but also I can simultaneously have a dislike or distaste for their presence. I am supposed to want to have Jesus first in my life even in comparison to my parents, wife, and children. I am still called to love my parents, wife, and children but Jesus always comes first because He is God and He is never wrong about anything. He must have my first allegiance. In the three synoptic gospels, Jesus tells us the following:

Matt 16:24 "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Mark 8:34 "And He summoned the multitude with His disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Luke 9:23 "And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ one must die to himself in every aspect of his life ("take up his cross"). The King James version states the following:

Rom 6:11 "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

We are to reckon (good ole Southern word!) ourselves to have no attraction at all to any kind of evil, but all of our desires should be of the things of God.

So all of the above means that if we are to be disciples of Jesus Christ we are indeed to put Him first in everything and to strive to be only receptive to the things of God. We indeed do hate anything or anyone that could come between us and Him. However when we put Jesus first, our attitudes toward our mother, father, wife, and children will be that of God toward them. I can be an infinitely better husband to my wife, Carol, as a Christian who loves Jesus first than if I were not a disciple of Jesus Christ. Indeed Jesus must come first in my life. My devotion to Jesus must come first, but as I immerse myself in learning what it means to really love Jesus first and foremost, then my love for my wife grows as I learn how much Jesus loves the church and died for the church.

There is no contradiction in the Bible when It tells us to love our wives and to hate our wives. The secret is in the interpretation using all the Bible to understand what God is telling us. The love we have for our wives is second only to the love that we have for Jesus. The problem in understanding this apparent contradiction is that we really don't understand what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. He is our Lord. I can recommend two books for you that will help in understanding the depth of our commitment to Jesus that God is calling us to attain^{3,4}. The high divorce rate in this country, even among so-called Christians, means that men don't even understand what it means to love their wives, much less what it means to love Jesus Christ. A person who has truly determined that he will die to every desire of his sin nature and submit himself totally to Jesus Christ will have a love for Jesus that makes the comparison of his love for his wife almost seem like hate. However he will be willing to die for his wife and will do whatever he can, short of denying Christ, to take care of his wife and children. This act of love/hate has been misinterpreted many times in history by people who twist the commands of God. Many cults have been formed based upon a misinterpretation of our love for Jesus and our love for family. There is only one Jesus Christ and He died and was resurrected over 2000 years ago. There is no other person that is due our total devotion. But in that devotion, we are also commanded to be the best caretakers of our families as possible.

I hope this little article has been helpful to you in understanding the total call upon ourselves by Jesus Christ and our commands from our Lord to love and care for our families.

1Tim 5:8 “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”

May we all love the Lord and be so devoted to Him that all of the other Scripture verses pertaining to our lives here on earth might be relatively easy. We will always be working on having God’s love for our persecutors, but we are commanded to work at it.

References

¹ May 8, 2004, “Daily Devotional With Adrian Rogers”, email daily devotions from “Living Theology”.

² <http://www.kypros.org/cgi-bin/lexicon>.

³ T. Alan Chrisope, “Jesus is Lord”, Evangelical Press, 1982.

⁴ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, “The Cost of Discipleship”, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1979.