

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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Imitating a Personal God: Imitating the God who hates

Today, in our land of so-called democracy, one of our most fundamental human rights is being constantly attacked by factions of society and government. Which one, you ask? It is the right to discriminate in a positive way according to our beliefs and values. Dictionaries generally give two definitions relating to discrimination. The first is the singling out of certain people for favour or disfavour and may, or may not, involve prejudice. God has certainly acted in this way. He, through His grace, has selected certain people of this world to be His children. He has discriminated in a positive way and *without* prejudice in order to bless those who trust in Him. It is without prejudice because God is the perfect being and must act righteously. Therefore His decisions are based upon His omniscience and His love.

The second definition of "discrimination" is "discernment". This is the ability to make fine distinctions and to make judgments based on what we believe to be true or best. In this country, our whole judicial system is based on this, but it is rapidly failing because it no longer holds to a set pattern of what is true or best. The laws of the land (particularly those revised since the Second World War and greatly influenced by multiculturalism and promiscuity) have led to the passing of laws laced with compromise. Should the rate of legislation gather momentum (as it has under this last government) then there will be so much confusion as to what we, as citizens, may or may not do that anarchy will be the ultimate result.

In recent news broadcasts, we have heard from leaders in the established church stating that Christianity is being "marginalised". That is to say, politically, it no longer has a positive influence upon this country's government and has, in fact, become a target for governmental legislation that restricts the practice of Bible-based belief and behaviour. On the front line, recent cases of Christians being banned from wearing items expressive of their religion while those of other faiths are allowed to do so has shown this to be the case. Also, in a recent news programme, we heard of a Christian woman being condemned for refusing two practising homosexuals a place in her boarding house. In the same broadcast, it was reported that two people who had kissed in public in Dubai had to serve a month's jail sentence each for breaking the country's decency laws. What a contrast in these extreme standards of morality!

At the time of writing this broadcast, the manifestos of our main political parties have been published. How many of them make a clear declaration on the subject of the morality of this nation? Do they not realise that unguarded standards of morality undermine the very foundation of a nation? The morality of the nation is an issue more vital than the economy itself. It needs to be addressed – and quickly! Sadly, this will be difficult for any new government because of the poorly thought out laws on "Equality" that rule the land.

This leads us to consider imitating the God who hates. It has often been said that God loves the sinner and hates the sin. This means He loves the person, but hates their evil thoughts and actions. However, in Malachi 1:2-3 we find the Lord speaking to the people of Israel saying: "I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness."

Jacob, the deceiver, was renamed "Israel" meaning "a prince with God". Why? Because God loved him. God, in His sovereignty, chose the descendants of Israel for blessing (Deuteronomy 7:7-9). In contrast, Esau and his offspring are pronounced as being hated by God. Why? Because Esau was wicked. Even though God sought his blessing while he lived on earth, Esau despised Him and went his own selfish way. God is able to look back and declare that He hated Esau. He found him loathsome! Sinner, while you live here you are loved by God. He seeks the best for you. He wants to bless you. He even sent His own Son to take the punishment for your sins at Calvary's cross. Will you continue to despise Him and all that He has done? When you pass from this world into the next, will God look back over your life and have to declare that He found you loathsome?

In Proverbs 6:16-19 we read: "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren."

Among these seven things there are two kinds of people that are specifically mentioned who are hated by the Lord. They are witnesses who seek to deceive and those who stir up strife in families. The first is governmental and the

second is domestic. When Christians are called upon as witnesses to some event, they are to be honest and upright. When trouble occurs in the family, then the Christian is to be a peacemaker, rather than the cause of the problem. In the circle of Christianity, judgment has to be made on certain issues. The integrity of witnesses is therefore important. It is the same with secular, judicial government. Furthermore, in the Christian family, those who are troublemakers must be dealt with in accordance to Scripture. Therefore, those who are deceitful and those who cause animosity are loathsome in the sight of God. Yet, it must be stressed, that while they are living here on this stage of decision, God in His love will still seek to win them for Himself and this may mean they will feel His hand in chastening.

The verse quoted before speaks of a “proud look” being obnoxious to God. The Hebrew word for “proud” comes from a root word meaning “high”. The definition of a proud look may be “a look of contempt”. It is a look from a person who thinks himself better than another whether it relates to social standing, race, religion or education. An example of this attitude is found in Luke 18 where Jesus spoke of a Pharisee and a tax collector praying in the temple. The Pharisee prayed listing his own goodness and his generous giving. He included the words “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are.” On the other hand, the tax collector beat his breast and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Jesus taught that it was the humility of the tax collector that pleased God. He showed that those who thought highly of themselves would be abased, whereas those who humbled themselves would be exalted. Let us as Christians hate that which is governed by pride and identify ourselves with people of low estate instead.

Telling a lie is speaking that which is not true. A lying tongue describes a person who is constantly telling lies. Some years ago, I taught in a school where there was a boy, nine years old, who could rattle off lie after lie in the most plausible way. By doing so, he managed to escape punishments for his own misdemeanours and, unfortunately, managed to get innocent children into trouble.

How true are the words of Proverbs 26:28: “A lying tongue hateth those that are afflicted by it; and a flattering mouth worketh ruin.” Lives can be totally destroyed by lies! It is no wonder that the lying tongue is obnoxious in the sight of God. James 3:5-6 shows us that the tongue may be small, but so is a rudder that steers a ship and a spark that sets a forest on fire. As Christians, we are to carefully guard our lips and be truthful in all circumstances.

The next item found in our verse refers to “hands that shed innocent blood”. Psalm 94:21 speaks of leaders who make laws to serve their own diabolical purposes. They gather themselves together against people who are righteous, and condemn those who are innocent. We only have to look at areas of the world affected by so-called “ethnic cleansing” to find leaders like this. They are evil men who, according to the Bible, will ultimately be cast into hell if they refuse to repent.

In this section, we may also see the blood of children who have been and, in some dark areas of the world, are still being offered to idols. Psalm 106:37 tells us that parents have sacrificed their children to demons. They had shed innocent blood. If they did not repent, they will suffer the torments of Hell.

Furthermore, we can see the hands of terrorists here. Those who set and explode bombs that destroy innocent lives. Without true repentance, the Scriptures tell us, their final destiny will be the lake of fire that burns with brimstone where they will suffer like worms in a perpetually burning ring of fire. Again, we find other groups of terrorists sending out people with bombs bound to their bodies. Many innocent people are killed by such bombs! Those responsible may think that they are destined for some kind of paradise being martyrs to their cause; but the Bible tells us God hates these actions and those who perpetrate them will be punished by Him in a day to come.

Another area in which innocent blood is shed is “abortion”. Thousands of unborn babies are unjustifiably being killed throughout the world. In Exodus 21:22-25, the judicial judgment upon those who cause a baby in the womb to be harmed is recorded as a life for a life, an eye for eye, a tooth for tooth, a hand for hand, a foot for foot, a burning for burning, a wound for wound, and a stripe for stripe. This is perfect justice! But look carefully! God classes the unborn foetus as a life! If it is killed, then the life of the killer is forfeited. Those who perform unjustifiable abortions (and do not repent) face the second death.

Sadly, there are those who say they are Christians who use violence and harassment as a method of standing against abortion. This is ungodly. It is not for us as Christians to oppose abortion in this way. Any judgment upon those who commit abortions should come from the judges of the land. However, should they fail, Christians may be assured that God will not! In the meanwhile, they may oppose the act by peaceful and lawful means.

Next we have the “heart that deviseth wicked imaginations”. This may be interpreted as the “heart that devises plans of wickedness”. Just before the flood in Noah’s day, God described the heart of man in this way: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5).

The heart is the centre of a person's life and will. It is this centre that influences his thoughts, words and actions. This is confirmed by the teaching of Jesus in Luke 6:45-46: "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" The first heart in this passage is one that is godly and trusts in God (for those who love God, hate evil). The other is wicked and rejects God. It is the latter that plots devious schemes that harm or rob. God confirms His hatred of these wicked hearts in Zechariah 8:17: "And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD." Psalm 1:6 speaks of their end. It states: "...The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

The second part of Proverbs 6:18 reads: "...Feet that be swift in running to mischief." If the first part of the verse spoke of the heart of a person who premeditates his evil acts, then here are the feet of a person who acts wickedly on impulse. The fact that he is "swift in running" shows that he has a desire to do mischief. He delights to cause harm, misery, distress and vexation. As Christians we should delight to do the opposite, namely, to heal, encourage, comfort and calm. Sadly, we live in a generation where running out of control and moving from one awful act to another is practised by an increasing number in our society. If there is no repentance – no turning to God's way – then God will stamp over their lives, "Hated!"

We have already stressed that it is the morality of a nation that is vital to its strength and stability. Leviticus 18:24 reveals that the God of the Bible would class us as a defiled nation. We read: "Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you..." You may well say this was written of Egypt and those nations God cast out from Canaan many years ago (Leviticus 18:2). This is true, but the things that defiled them are also listed in the verses of the chapter and apply to our nation today. For example, the chapter states there should be no sexual union between those who are closely related (verses 6-18); no adultery (verse 20); no sacrificing children to false gods (verse 21); no homosexuality (verse 22); and no bestiality (verse 23).

In the New Testament book of 1 Corinthians 6 we find a list of those classed as unrighteous. From verses 9-10 we read: "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." What a wide-ranging list! Who then can be saved?

It has to be said that these verses apply to those who practise these things. There is, however, hope for the unrighteous! The verse that follows speaks to Christians, saying: "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Repentance and faith in the living God will make you a new creation – a new person inside!

There is an important principle that arises from immoral practice among Christians, namely, discipline in the church. The Bible shows us that a church is to deal righteously with a believer who is dishonouring God through immorality. The apostle Paul had to write to the Corinthian Christians on such a matter: "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife" (1 Corinthians 5:1). Paul has to severely rebuke the church at Corinth for tolerating this evil. In fact, the church was taking pride in being forgiving towards him. The apostle tells them to deliver such a person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. He goes on to say that their glorying was not good and that a little leaven leavens the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:5-6). This sinful man was to be excommunicated from the church until he repented of his wickedness. This is the most severe punishment that the church can inflict, but it is always with a view to the restoration of the person. At the same time, it acts as a deterrent to other Christians who may have considered participating in such wicked acts themselves.

Paul, whose epistles are called the commandments of the Lord, goes on to say that the church members should not keep company with so-called "Christians" who are fornicators, covetous, idolaters, railers, drunkards, or extortioners. They are not even to eat with them. Notice, Paul does not include such who are unbelievers. This Scripture relates to the church and its discipline only. In 1 Corinthians 5:13 Paul states: "...Them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person." The government of the day is producing legislation that hinders Christian churches from exercising this kind of discipline. It is time for Christians to step up the testimony in this land through the preaching of the gospel of truth, before God has to step in with further judgment!

God also hates idols. These are graven images supposed to represent people or gods to be worshipped. In a future day, an image of a man will be set up in the temple of God at Jerusalem. It is called the "Abomination of Desolation" by Jesus in Matthew 24. Today, there are people who still worship gods represented by images as part of their religion. Sadly, this even happens in some areas of Christendom. Images set up as objects of worship, or to encourage worship, are loathed by God. May the Lord keep us from being ensnared by such forms of worship. True

Christian worship does not need images or artefacts as prompts. The teaching of Jesus in John 4 shows that Christians are to worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Paul reveals that it is Satan who lurks behind every idol. He instructs the Corinthian Christians in this way: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the table of devils" (1 Corinthians 10:20-21).

Satan is also behind other things that the Lord hates. The divination of Deuteronomy 18:10 is a little like the fortune-tellers of today who, for a fee, would seek to predict your future. The astrologers of the same verse are those who seek to make predictions by interpreting the stars and their positions and usually charge for their "wisdom". Again, we find in the chapter enchanters who are those who practice the magic arts. In verse 11 of the same chapter, we find charmers who cast spells. Witches do likewise. The voodoo practices of our present day could be represented here. Those who have familiar spirits (like real mediums and so-called wizards) are hated by God. These are all practices of darkness and though they may seem acceptable and even entertaining to society in general through the media, they are extremely dangerous and can be life destroying. I'm sure we can all think of popular books, films and TV programmes that contain such things. Reading or watching these is defiling to a Christian.

Today, we find that the acceptance of prostitution is on the increase. Yet the hire of a whore is loathsome to God (Deuteronomy 23:17-18). Many in society may smile at a man or a woman who dresses continually in the clothes of the opposite sex; but God finds this obnoxious. In Deuteronomy 22:5 we read: "The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God."

In this day and age of divorce, we find a surprising instruction relating to a man who divorces his wife in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. It tells us that if the wife marries again but is divorced from her second husband she must not remarry the first. This would be the same vice-versa.

Honesty in business is also encouraged by the God who hates "dishonest scales" (Deuteronomy 25:13-16). In a day of recession caused by the greed of many, not the least, estate agents and bankers, this should be taken to heart. It is clear that our government came close to bankruptcy and the threat remains. It needs to be honest about this if it wants the support of its citizens and must take extremely drastic action to avoid it. The same kind of action is required by Christians in the spiritual realm. We must, as it were, nail our colours to the mast.

In this talk we have considered things that are loathed by God. If we, as Christians, are to live *godly* in Christ Jesus then we must learn to hate the things God hates but, at the same time, truly love and seek the blessing of the people of this world. May God give us the grace to do so, for His name's sake.

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