

Sunday, September 10, 2017

“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.” (Malachi 1:2-3)

Over the decades that we have been preaching on the streets of this world, one of the things that enrages people the most is that we preach about the hatred of God. It is so clear that the Bible teaches that God loves some people and that He hates some people, but depraved human beings rebel against that attribute of God's hatred. They won't tolerate that God is a sovereign God and can choose to have mercy on whom He will have mercy. So we get to hear rather incessantly that “God loves everyone,” or “God doesn't hate anyone,” or “‘God’ and ‘hate’ don't belong in the same sentence,” or “I've been going to church every Sunday for my whole life, and I guarantee you that God only loves,” or “I don't know anything about God or the Bible, but I know this: God doesn't hate,” or some other variation on that fleshly theme.

One of the ways that many of us have responded over the years is to say something like, “You can't truly understand the love of God without understanding the hatred of God.” From time to time I catch myself using this as a debate point, like I'm trying to win an argument and prove somebody wrong just for the sake of showing them that they're wrong and I'm right. But this ought to not be just a debate point. This is good, solid doctrine, and it's good to consider it and think about it. The doctrine comes from Malachi 1, among other places. You really can't understand the love of God if you don't understand the hatred of God. Here's the whole oracle out of Malachi:

“The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. 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. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.” (Malachi 1:1-5)

What I'd like to do first is define what we mean by God's love and hatred.

The love of God

The love of God is not an emotion, passion, feeling or sentiment like it is in humans. When we speak of the love of God, we mean:

1. His eternal will and purpose to choose, have mercy on, deliver, be gracious to, bless, save, and ultimately glorify in heaven, His elect people. This love of God is not based on anything other than “the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:5). The manifestation of this love was in sending His Son to die for our sins (John 3:16, 1 John 4:10). [Note: We also see this in the context of the election of an entire nation; see below.]
2. Delight and approbation. For example, “He loveth righteousness and judgment” (Psalm 33:5). When spoken of in terms of humans, He can only love us in this manner inasmuch as we are in Christ, and are partakers of His righteousness. Otherwise, we are filthy, polluted sinners, and cannot be the objects of His delight and approval. So we see that “The Lord taketh pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.” (Psalm 149:4).
3. Actual beneficence. *“This actual beneficence respects all blessings, whether of a temporal, spiritual or eternal nature. Temporal good things are indeed indiscriminately bestowed in a greater or less degree on all, whether elect or reprobate, but they are given in a covenant way and as blessings to the elect only, to whom also the other benefits respecting grace and glory are peculiar.”* (Zanchias).

The hatred of God

Just as the love of God, the hatred of God is not an emotion, passion, feeling or sentiment like it is in humans. The hatred of God means:

1. His eternal will and purpose to reject, not have mercy on, not provide any of the deliverances, graces or blessings associated with eternal life, not save, and ultimately damn in hell, those people who He has determined are reprobates. Like His love, this hatred of God is not based on anything other than His sovereign will. [Note: We also see this in the context of the reprobation of an entire nation; see below.]
2. Displeasure, dislike, and revulsion. The idea is that God can’t stand the sight, sound or smell of those things that He hates. *“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity”* (Habakkuk 1:13). *“But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”* (Isaiah 59:2). *“I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies.”* (Amos 5:21). The word “abomination” that we see throughout the scripture captures the idea – it’s a disgusting, foul, detestable, loathsome thing. In fact, in the New Testament, the primary word that we see for “abomination” comes from a root word meaning “to stink.”

The vast majority of Christendom (so-called) will say “God hates the sin but loves the sinner.” Many, in fact, will not even ascribe to God a hatred of sin, let alone a hatred of sinners, and thereby blasphemously teach that God delights in and approves of rebellion

against Him. Of course, we know that He hates sin and sinner. It is the “abominable” person that is in hell being punished (Revelation 21:8), not his abomination. It is the “worker of iniquity” that God says that He hates (Psalm 5:5), not just the iniquity.

To be repulsive and hateful to God is the natural state of all mankind, and this is how we would all appear to Him were it not for Christ. Jonathan Edwards was accurate when he said the following in his sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” This is how we appear outside of Christ:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked. His wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else but to be cast into the fire. He is of purer eyes than to bear you in his sight; you are ten thousand times as abominable in his eyes as the most hateful, venomous serpent is in ours.

You have offended him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince, and yet it is nothing but his hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell since you have sat here in the house of God provoking his pure eye by your sinful, wicked manner of attending his solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

God’s love and hatred are so inextricably linked to the doctrines of election and reprobation that it will also be good to spend a minute or two fleshing out what the Bible teaches about those things.

Election

Election is used in the Bible in the following ways:

1. *“That eternal, sovereign, unconditional, particular and immutable act of God where He selected some from among all mankind and of every nation under heaven to be redeemed and everlastingly saved by Christ.”* (Zanchias). These elect of God are described as “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:2).

As a direct result of this everlasting election, God actually, visibly, and conspicuously separates and sanctifies His elect from the world. So we see in John 15:19 – “If ye were of

the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

2. God choosing an entire nation or group of people out of the world to enter into a covenant with Him, whereby they receive certain temporal blessings, such as having the oracles of God committed to them (Romans 3:2). The obvious example we have of this is the Jewish people, such as we read about in Deuteronomy 7 (and many other places):

“For thou *art* an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye *were* the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

This does not mean that every individual who is a Jew is part of that special, eternal election that will result in them going to heaven. In fact, most of them will be going to hell. Nevertheless, God has made a covenant with them, and has bestowed great temporal blessings on them.

3. God’s appointment of some person to a particular office here on earth. For example, Judas is numbered among the chosen twelve in John 6:70 – “Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” And Saul was chosen (elected) by God to be the king: “See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen.” (1 Samuel 10:24). That doesn’t mean that either of these evil men went to heaven. Quite the contrary, they were both damned to hell.

Reprobation

When we talk about the doctrine of reprobation in the Bible, we mean one of the following:

1. *“God's eternal preterition of some men, when He chose others to glory, and His predestination of them to fill up the measure of their iniquities and then to receive the just punishment of their crimes, even ‘destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.’” (Zanchias).* We read about these reprobates in verses like Jude 4 – “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The result of this eternal reprobation is that God does not, in fact, give grace to those

reprobate men, He does not call them out of the world and sanctify them as His people, and He does not reveal Himself to them. It is for this that Jesus rejoiced in Luke 10:21 – “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

And just one note about this everlasting reprobation of God. We should be very careful about authoritatively declaring that this or that person is a reprobate. It is one thing to warn a sinner who has all the earmarks of being a reprobate, but it’s quite another to presumptuously think that we can know for sure that that same sinner won’t be saved tomorrow.

2. God rejecting an entire nation or people, and refusing to grant to them the same temporal benefits and light as He has provided to other nations. We see this time and again in the Bible with how God deals with the nations surrounding Israel. (For example, the Edomites). This doesn’t mean, however, that every person living in a reprobate nation is necessarily damned to hell.

Election has been said to be the golden thread that runs through the whole Christian system. It is so interwoven in the Gospel that you cannot claim to be a Gospel preacher without speaking of election, and its corollary, reprobation, early and often. You can open the Bible at any point, and it won’t be long before you are reading about two types of people – those who are saved, and those who are damned; those who are chosen, and those who are rejected; those who are blessed, and those who are cursed; those who are recipients of God’s mercy, and those who are recipients of His wrath; those who are given outward temporal benefits, and those who are denied those benefits; those who are loved, and those who are hated.

Even outside of the Bible, look at the reality around you. We see the sovereign, distinguishing will of God in our daily lives as well. Why did Hurricane Harvey devastate Houston and not some other city? And why did it only devastate part of Houston? A family sat on a rooftop in Houston waiting for help, when they witnessed the dead bodies of another family floating by – why was one family killed and another spared? Now we have Hurricane Irma, with Hurricane Jose on its heels. In the country of Antigua and Barbuda, why was the island of Barbuda destroyed but Antigua was open for business a day or two later? The two islands are 40 miles away from each other, while Hurricane Irma was 400 miles across, with a 30-mile eye. Their Prime Minister said, “I never contemplated any possibility that you could have such a contrast.” These hurricanes are small adumbrations of the final wrath of God, but within them we can see that God has the sovereign right to save one person and destroy another.

God is sovereign in the affairs of our lives, day by day. He is also sovereign over eternity, and who goes to heaven and hell. We have the distinguishing will of God when it comes to the means of

salvation. “No man cometh unto the Father,” says the Lord Jesus, “but by **me**.” (John 14:6). But the reality is that there are groups of people on this earth who never have, and never will, even hear about Jesus Christ, let alone believe on Him. Why do we have uncontacted tribes, like the Sentinelese, who are so isolated that they don’t even know that Jesus Christ exists? And for the rest of the more civilized world why is it illegal in many countries to possess a Bible, or to identify yourself as a Christian?

Most importantly, why is it that some believe and some don’t? We, in this church, are eyewitnesses to this. We see people called out to believe from countries, cities, neighborhoods, families, and houses. And we see people living in the same circumstances passed over and left to die in their sins. As the hymn goes:

*Why was I made to hear thy voice
And enter while there’s room,
When thousands make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come?*

Of course, the answer to all this is, “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.” (Matthew 11:26).

One of the most striking and instructive cases of this is that of Jacob and Esau which we find in our text of Malachi 1:1-5.

If you haven’t read about Jacob and Esau recently, it would be worth your time to go back and read it for yourself, but I’ll give a brief recap and try to hit the main points. Remember, my thesis in this sermon is that you can’t truly understand the love of God without understanding the hatred of God, so I’m going to focus a little bit more on Esau, who was hated by God.

Jacob and Esau were twin brothers, the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Esau was the firstborn. When they were in the womb, we have this prophecy straight from the mouth of God: “Two nations *are* in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and *the one* people shall be stronger than *the other* people; and the elder shall serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23). Esau grew up to be a cunning hunter, a man of the field, and was loved by his father, Isaac, because of the venison that he gave him. One day he came in from hunting, and showed his complete disregard and disdain for his birthright, and everything that it represented, and sold it to Jacob for a mess of pottage. When we read about this incident in Hebrews 12, we are told that Esau was a fornicator and a profane man.

Later, it came time for Isaac to bless Esau, the elder son, but Rebekah and Jacob tricked Isaac into blessing Jacob instead. “Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing wherewith his father blessed

him” (Genesis 27:41) and plotted to kill him. The descendants of Esau never really got over this and always had bitter envying and strife in their hearts towards the descendants of Jacob.

Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob to Padanaram to dwell with Laban to escape Esau’s wrath, and to find a wife. Meanwhile Esau, much to the grief of his parents, had previously married two Canaanite women. When he understood that Isaac was not pleased with the idea of marrying Canaanite women, Esau showed his utter cluelessness and lack of understanding by trying to remedy the situation by marrying an Ishmaelite. He took wives from one group of reprobates, and thought he could fix it by taking another wife from another group of reprobates.

When Jacob returned from Padanaram some years later with his wives and children, he and Esau had a reconciliation (probably not a sincere reconciliation on the part of Esau, because he passed on a hatred of Israel to his descendants).

When you see references in the scripture to Mt. Seir, Edom, Idumea, or Teman, we’re talking about the descendants of Esau and the land that they inhabited. They had a bitter hatred for the Israelites, which they showed in such ways as not allowing the Jews to walk through their land during the time of the Exodus, and rejoicing over the destruction of Judah by the Babylonians. In fact, they not only rejoiced over the destruction, they stepped in and helped the Babylonians and participated in violence and the spoiling of Jerusalem. This was a particularly egregious thing in the eyes of God, because the Edomites were brothers to the Israelites. There is a law in the Mosaic code that says, “Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he *is* thy brother.” (Deuteronomy 23:7). These Edomites joined forces with the Babylonians, those notorious enemies of the people of God, to try to destroy their own brother, and they have paid dearly for it, and will pay dearly for it for eternity: “For *thy* violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever.” (Obadiah 1:10).

Today, there is no identifiable group of people called the Edomites, and there is no longer a country called Edom or Idumea. They have been wiped off the planet, as far as we know (of course, God knows the lineage of every person).

Returning to Malachi 1, this prophecy is given after the Babylonian captivity is done, and the Jews have been allowed by the Medes and the Persians to return to their own land to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. It is in that situation that God tells them, “I have loved you.” In the immediate context, he’s speaking to the Israelites, and not specifically to His elect among the Israelites. We are talking about the national election of the Jews, and all the benefits, blessings and providential care that He had given them for so many years (see Deuteronomy 7:6-8). It is important to note that the national election of the Jews is a standing symbol for the eternal, personal, sovereign, unchanging election and love that God has for His people:

“For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel.” (Romans 9:6)

“Behold Israel after the flesh” (1 Corinthians 10:18) compared to “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16)

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29)

Whenever you see a Jew walking around today, that is a standing testament to the power of God to separate a group of people out of the world and give them unique promises and blessings. The other thing to note is that when we are talking about the election of the Jews, we have an overlap between the election of the Jews as a nation, and the personal election of His little ones among the Jews. One of the primary reasons that He has preserved those Jews as a people (national, temporal election) is to ultimately fulfill His promises and prophecies regarding the salvation of the Jews and returning their captivity in the last days (personal, eternal election of the 144,000 that we read about in Revelation).

After God says, “I have loved you,” they contemptuously reply, “wherein hast thou loved us?” Instead of being humbled, they ignore the hundreds of years of blessings and deliverances, including the most recent deliverance from the Babylonians, and dwell on the fact that they had just been punished at the direct hand of God. Their attitude is one of entitlement, as if they deserve the blessings of God, and do not deserve to be punished. If we are ever under a chastisement, and we frequently are (“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.” Hebrews 12:6), please don’t let our attitude be the same.

God’s reply to their impertinent question is basically, “Here’s how I loved you: Jacob and Esau were brothers, and I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.” They were brothers. Twin brothers. “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” (v. 2). By all fleshly wisdom, Esau, as the firstborn, should have been given the preference, but he was hated. They were in the same womb, brought up by the same parents, in the same house, at the same time, with the same instruction. “Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.” (v. 2-3). When God is speaking of His love of Jacob and His hatred of Esau, He’s talking about both the personal, eternal election and reprobation of the two individuals, and the national, temporal election and reprobation of their offspring. Remember, Paul quotes this passage in Romans 9, and is clearly using it to talk about personal and particular election and reprobation:

“And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, *even* by our father Isaac; (For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.” (Romans 9:10-13)

Continuing in Malachi 1, “I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.” (Malachi 1:3-5).

God hated Esau, and God hated the offspring of Esau (the nation of Edom). He took their land and made it desolate. While Israel went back and rebuilt after the Babylonian captivity, Edom was never able to fully rebuild. They tried, and never succeeded, because God had designated them as the border of wickedness and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever, and therefore threw down what they built. The Jews were eyewitnesses to the difference between how God dealt with them and how He dealt with Edom.

This is an adumbration of the thousand-year reign of Christ, when the Jews will be fully restored, the new temple will be established, and they will be dwelling with Christ in an Eden-like environment in the promised land. They will see how God has blessed them compared to the other nations. And of course, this is an adumbration of eternity, where we will dwell in heaven in the love of God, and where part of our joy and experience of the love of God towards us will be this:

“And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.” (Isaiah 66:24)

As Gill says: *“the true worshippers of God...cannot but applaud the justice of God in their condemnation; and admire distinguishing grace and mercy, that has preserved them from the like ruin and destruction.”* It will be a constant reminder of His love towards us.

So how has God loved us? Compare your lot to the lot of the reprobate, and you’ll understand. Compare the graces and spiritual blessings you’ve received to a natural man, who doesn’t even have the capacity to understand spiritual things (1 Corinthians 2:14). Compare the crown of life that He has promised to them that love Him with the end of the wicked. And do all that humbly, saying “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13), understanding that all of this was decided before the foundation of the world, and not based whatsoever on our works. When we see the contrast, we understand that the state of the reprobate would be our state had He not plucked us out of it. We appreciate the love of God more and in turn, we love Him more. Without the hatred of God, His love would be meaningless.

I will close with a quote from Zanchias in “Absolute Predestination”:

“Besides, the creation and perdition of the ungodly answer another purpose (though a subordinate one) with regard to the elect themselves, who from the rejection of those learn (1) to admire the riches of the Divine love toward themselves, which planned and has accomplished the work of their salvation, while others, by nature on an equal level with them, are excluded from a participation of the same benefits. And such a view of the Lord's distinguishing mercy is (2) a most powerful motive to thankfulness that when they too might justly have been condemned with the world of the non-elect, they were marked out as heirs of the grace of life. (3) Hereby they are taught ardently to love their heavenly Father; (4) to trust in Him assuredly for a continued supply of grace while they are on earth, and for the accomplishment of His eternal decree and promise by their glorification in heaven; and (5) to live as becomes those who have received such unspeakable mercies from the hand of their God and Saviour. So Bucer somewhere observes that the punishment of the reprobate ‘is useful to the elect, inasmuch as it influences them to a greater fear and abhorrence of sin, and to a firmer reliance on the goodness of God.’”

I love you. Amen.