

Hatred is an Odd Problem

by Carl McMurray

Hatred is an odd problem to deal with in life. Just consider the definitions of hatred i.e. 1) a malicious feeling toward others, Matthew 10:22; 2) a right feeling of aversion from what is evil, Hebrews 1:9; and 3) a relative preference for one thing over another, as in Luke 14:26. By definition then, this powerful emotion is something to be avoided at all costs, while at other times it is to be encouraged, and still at other times it is simply a choice to be made in preferring one thing to another. Can we ever truly understand this part of man's thinking? Certainly we can, for God's word tells us everything we need to know that pertains to life and godliness, 2 Peter 1:3.

The third and mildest usage of the word as a preference describes the choice that the Christian must make in his life commitment and at every juncture where he chooses between being led by the Spirit or following the flesh. The child of God must "hate" his life, his loved ones, and even his own self in the sense of choosing to do the will of God first, before any and all of the above. That is not to say he must even dislike these things. It simply says he chooses Christ first! Luke 14:26; John 12:25; Matthew 10:37-39.

The second usage of the term, hatred, is always to be encouraged because it is a characteristic of our Heavenly Father. We should always hate sin, iniquity, lawlessness, and every evil deed. Hebrews 1:9 describes this as one of the characteristics of our model, Jesus. We see it demonstrated twice in the gospels as He cleansed the temple of those who had forgotten its purpose. We know that our Lord never stopped loving all men, for He continued to be willing to die for all. Only a "hatred" for ungodly purposes could have brought forth the righteous indignation we see on those two occasions. And herein lies the difficulty...

We, as imperfect men, sometimes have trouble separating the sin from the sinner—especially when the sin has been perpetrated on ourselves. It becomes easy to hate and let malice take root when we have been betrayed or hurt. This first definition of hatred, i.e. animosity toward another, any other, even our enemy is plainly forbidden. Malice, 1 Peter 2:1 tells us, belongs to the old life. 1 John 3:15 identifies the one who gives in to hate as a murderer, bereft of eternal life. Why? Because the sin is as much in the heart, the inward disposition, as the action. There is simply no way to align "praying for one's enemies" and malice, grudge bearing, and hatred. It is a heart disease that must always be defeated and rooted out. This root of bitterness simply cannot be allowed to live in our hearts. God will bless your efforts to fight it.

