

A FELLOWSHIP OF HATRED

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In their preference for the doctrines of Christianity that stress love and good will, many persons overlook the fact that there is also a negative aspect of the religion. It inculcates with equal force the obligation to hate, shun, and oppose whatever is inimical to Christ and His way for man's life.

Perhaps this negative phase of our duty under the gospel has no better representation than that afforded by our Lord's remarks to the churches at Ephesus and Pergamos (Rev. 2:1-17). He plainly indicates to the latter congregation (v. 15) that he bears a holy hatred toward the sensual cult known as the Nicolaitans. And, in listing the points in the record of the Ephesians which He approved, He has this to say on the subject: "But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate" (v. 6 cf. v. 2).

Not only, therefore, does it appear from this that hatred in the church can be reckoned as a virtue before God--if it be against the things which God hates. It is also evident that in so hating we actually have fellowship with Him. We have heard of the fellowship of the saints, fellowship in the gospel, the fellowship of the Son, etc. Here is yet another kind of fellowship--a fellowship of hatred. And its desirability for the church is clearly indicated by the Lord.

Of course, it is not alone the sensuality of the followers of the heretical Nicolaus that God hates. And, consequently, our opportunities for fellowship with Him in this righteous hatred are not confined to this manifestation of sin. The Bible tells us of many things loathed by the Deity. The resume at Prov. 6:16-19 is typical. There we find such commonly tolerated sinners as "a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among the brethren" listed as an abomination to God. In censuring those who persist in these sins, then, we may also have fellowship with God. As Paul indicates at Rom. 16:17-18: not only is it the church's privilege to have this fellowship with its Lord in the condemnation of the impenitently sinful, but it is also a distinct obligation to do so.

Obviously, space limitation does not permit even a reference to all that God has to say in this connection. Those interested in looking at least somewhat further into His attitude of hatred toward sin, which attitude He calls upon His saints to cultivate after Him, will find these Scriptures instructive: 2 Chron. 19:2; Ps. 97: 10; 101:3; 119:104, 113, 128, 163; 139:21-22; Prov. 8:1-13; Isa. 61: 8; Jer. 44:4; Amos 5:15; Micah 3: 1-2 ; Zech. 8 :17; Mal. 1:1-3; Matt. 6:24; Rom. 7:15; 9:15; Heb. 1:9; Jas. 4:4; 1 Jno. 2:15-17; Jude 25. The keynote, no doubt, is sounded in the Hebrews text. In description of Christ--who is the "express image" of God---it is said that He "hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." And the Psalmist (119:104) speaks for all who have the divine Mind in saying: "I hate every false way."

Thus, if we are to attain to the "measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), and to have perfect fellowship with Him, we must acquire a righteous hatred for sin, along with our development of the love of God, His truth, and His people. In case of those who, after sufficient instruction and admonition, will not turn from sin, we must learn to practice such disfellowship as will, if they cannot be brought to repentance, at least demonstrate to them our righteous aversion to their iniquity.

In this day of overwrought toleration in the church, this lesson is sorely needed. The line of demarcation between holiness and worldliness has all but vanished. The Christian eldership, in timidity and compromise, in many cases has virtually ceased to "reprove, rebuke, and exhort" (2 Tim. 4:2), or even to support those courageous enough to do so. We must remember that God's ways are not man's ways and that our thoughts are not His thoughts. If we are to walk with Him, we must sacrifice our ways for His. The two courses are "contrary the one to the other (Gal. 5:13-26).

In a word, we must hate something---either God or the Devil, righteousness. or sin, the narrow way of the gospel or the broad road of the world. We cannot love both simultaneously. May god help us, therefore, to have fellowship with Him by hating sin as He hates it, and loving righteousness as He does.