

What God Hates

Proverbs 6:16-19 | Bryce Beale | May 7, 2017

Who is God?

With what words could I answer that question? The LORD answered it himself when Moses stood barefoot before the blazing bush of Sinai: “I am who I am,” he said. God is. There are no words of description which we can set afterward which would do God justice.

Skip forward past the plagues of Egypt, and Moses has returned to that same mountain, now with a liberated people at its base. Sinai shakes and smokes and thunders, and there amidst the tumult is Moses—no longer is a bush before him, but a billowing manifestation of the living God.

And as if to mimic the mountain itself, Moses’ heart catches ablaze with one burning request, which he cries to Yahweh: “Show me your glory!” God is, yes, but God is what? Moses requests to know with whom he speaks; who is this mysterious Dread Sovereign of the universe? God is—God is what? Small Moses strains to see through the impenetrable darkness.

“You cannot see my face,” the Almighty booms, “for man shall not see me and live.”¹

You and I are in the same circumstance this morning. I am commissioned by Yahweh to set before you a description of him, to turn your eyes in these few minutes from the cares of earth to the glories of the Earth-Maker. And you are under obligation as his creature to raise your eyes to your Creator, to set him in the center of your concentration.

And as we begin our task, intent on straining the sight of our faith so that we may see God, it is as if the voice booms from above us: “You cannot see my face.”

We might reason all day about God and think we have him figured out, much like Job, only to have the whirlwind crash through these windows and rage before us, sending out the voice of him within it: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”²

¹ Exodus 33:20 (ESV).

² Job 38:1-2.

We have only seen the fringes of his ways!³ And it is hard to see much more.

Then what will we do this morning? How will we come away with a knowledge of God greater than that with which we came, if he is shrouded in darkness and beyond the grasp of our finite minds?

There are several ways God has provided—he condescends in his speech, for example, as if he were a father lisping to his toddler. He speaks to us in limited ways, but in ways we can understand. We read of God’s arm outstretched—God, being spirit, has no arm, but we can understand an outstretched arm, and the strength that it has. By speaking in our language, God bends down to communicate himself to us. He shows us his back, in a sense.

But there is another way, and it is the path we will follow up the mountain this morning.

A. W. Tozer writes of it:

Because our intellectual knowledge of God is so small and obscure, we can sometimes gain considerable advantage in our struggle to understand what God is like by the simple expedient of thinking what He is not like.⁴

This morning, we are thinking of what God is not like.

When you do not know the answer to a quiz question in school, you begin to think of all the things the answer isn’t. If the question is multiple choice, you mark out A and C and D, and then conclude that B is the answer.

This morning we are marking out those things that God says he is absolutely not. In fact, they are so anti-God that his hatred burns against them. And our task will be to set these pieces of the frame in place, so that, although we cannot know God fully or gaze into his glorious face, we will, by knowing what he certainly is not, see somewhat more clearly what he is.

PROVERBS 6:16-19

If ever God has told us what he is not, it is now, in these verses. See again verse 16. I cannot fathom a more powerful way for God to say that these things have nothing at all to do with him. “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him.” The poetry escalates—there are six, no, there are seven! God hates each of

³ Job 26:14.

⁴ *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2009), 55.

them—yes, he abominates them! No tenth part of a trace of a fragment of a speck of any of these evils find a place anywhere in the holy being of God.

Yet before we proceed, I need to answer one objection.

You might say, “Look at the very first of the seven things God hates. It is pride. It is thinking you are great, and looking down upon others—but isn’t that what God does? Doesn’t he think he is great, and look down from heaven on all his imperfect creatures?”

We find again a limitation in our knowledge of God. We are applying to him human standards, we imagine him to be altogether like ourselves.

So if we are going to take these anti-God abominations and make them a contrast so that we can know God, we must set them against not God as God only, but God as man. We can only take these abominations among men and set them in contrast to God if we know what God as a man would be like.

And here—marvel at it!—God has condescended to communicate to us in that very way. We understand what it is to be human more than we understand anything else—and God has therefore chosen this language to speak to us in. He has taken on flesh, become a mortal man in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ.

This is why we read in the gospel of John, “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.”⁵ That is Jesus.

So, we spare no tool in our task today! We make use of every trail God has marked up the mountain. We consider what God is not, and we consider it in contrast to God’s revelation to us as a man, in Jesus.

My intention is to take these seven things that are anti-God and to set them in contrast to Jesus Christ. And my prayer is that, though we are but children, we might leave this mountain with a better sight of God than we have had before.

What God is not

Proud

So then, we look into the eyes of the God-man, of Jesus Christ, and what do we see? It is hard to tell—who can describe the infinitude in those eyes?

But let us focus our lens by asking what we do not see.

⁵ John 1:18.

In his eyes, we see no pride.

Look at verse 17 of our text: “Haughty eyes.”

We are all prone to that attitude of the Assyrian king who conquered kingdoms. With his foot upon the rubble he would say, “By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom, for I have understanding.”⁶ His eyes were raised as he looked down upon the fallen. Or again, that Babylonian leader who gazed down from his palace rooftop with arrogant eyes and mused, “Is not this great Babylon, which I have built by my mighty power as a royal residence and for the glory of my majesty?”⁷

Pride is the tinder which sparks and the dry wood which fuels the bonfire of corruption. Six of the seven things God hates begin with this, the first, pride, the lifted eye which overestimates itself and despises everyone else.

Pride is the chest puffed out against God. When tragedy occurs, pride complains against God’s providence, as though the sufferer knew better than the faithful Creator. When pride has a goal, it does not pray for help but falls back upon its own merit and might. A truly humble person submits himself to the will of God without complaint; pride murmurs at every stage of the wilderness.

Look again with me, then, at the eyes of Jesus, those two universes of unfathomable depth. We can be sure, though we do not know all they contain, that they do not contain this: pride.

If we were to see him on earth in the years of his ministry, we might mistake him for a man like one of us. We might assume that he had been formed like us from unconsciousness into a conscious being, and that his knowledge stretched back only that far. But what mystery, that behind his eyes he bears remembrance of eternity. Behind his eyes are the memories of heavenly glory, of angelic majesties covering their face before him, of a thousand thousand ages of his unquestionable authority and undiminished happiness.

And walking along the shore of Galilee’s sea surrounded by ignorant crowds, followed by fishermen, attended by the lame and lepers, confronted by arrogant opponents who shake their fists like ants intending to extinguish the sun—we would expect any great ruler to despise these masses of unimportant men, almost all of whom are forgotten now.

⁶ Isaiah 10:12-13.

⁷ Daniel 4:29.

But more amazing than all that lies behind the eyes of our Savior, is that which is clear upon them. Not pride, but humility.

When within the Trinity the Father intended to send his Son to earth to save these masses, the Son consented with no complaint. He stood from his eternal throne, and set aside the crown of gold from his head; he laid down his scepter which shatters kingdoms with a click against the glassy sea beneath him, and removed his regal robe. In the words of the letter to Philippi, “though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.”⁸

And then he walked along our earth, and submitted himself to our spit and lashes, and to the most shameful form of a torturous death that our pride could invent, crying out, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.”⁹

This is God as man. There is no haughtiness in his dealings with us.

Deceitful

We set our first piece of contrast in place, and move on to the second. Verse 17 again: “a lying tongue.” Look also at verse 19: “a false witness who breathes out lies.”

These together describe the deceit of the worthless man.

The second is more specific than the first—we are speaking of an evil and a selfish deceit, false witness against a neighbor. We are not speaking of a lie meant to save life, like the lie of the midwives in Egypt; this is a deceit that kills to get what it wants.

The law of Israel required that two or three witnesses testify in any capital case.¹⁰ This would prevent wrongful deaths—unless the two or three had colluded together to put to death the innocent for some selfish reason.

These sons of Belial want something but cannot get it rightfully; so they are willing to wrong you for it.

In fact, if it is necessary for them to destroy relationships by their deceit in order to lay hold of their goal, they will do it. See the final thing God hates in verse 19: “one who sows discord among brothers.” The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.¹¹ In the bully dynamics of middle and high school, you

⁸ Philippians 2:6-7.

⁹ Luke 23:34.

¹⁰ Deuteronomy 17:7-6.

¹¹ Proverbs 18:8.

will find a young girl turning her friends against another young girl whom she dislikes. She is willing to twist the truth for the sake of a sound slander. And in effect we sow discord daily with our gossip which, often stretched beyond fact, casts disgrace upon the one of whom we speak.

One moment's reflection on these human tendencies will make you cry out like Isaiah, "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."¹² We swim in lies and, like fish, we are unaware of this putrid water about us. Infomercials are almost always an exaggeration; those selling their product want you to believe it will help you more than it can, so that they can get your money into their pockets. But this is expected.

And there are many more examples of deceit for a dollar that could be given.

But nowhere were false witnesses more despicable than on the night of Jesus' arrest, in the courtyard of the high priest. Human tongues spewed fire that night. We read that "the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death, but they found none. For many bore false witness against him, but their testimony did not agree."¹³

Their tongues strutted the earth around Jesus. But when we look to him, head likely lowered in the tumult, what kind of a tongue do we find?

One without deceit.

The next day Jesus could clear himself and leave his trials, and the cross, behind him, if he will only beg Pilate for a reprieve. But he will not.

Instead he says, "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth."¹⁴

His tongue can only speak the truth, it cannot lie. And so, like many who would follow him, he lays himself quietly upon the altar of truth to await the dagger's fall.

Brothers and sisters, you will see the moon put into a child's mouth like a gumdrop and a pig fly across the sky before you ever hear Christ utter a single falsehood. His intentions are pure, his tongue is clean. What he

¹² Deuteronomy 6:5.

¹³ Mark 14:55-56.

¹⁴ John 18:37.

has promised us is truer than all the calculations of mathematics and all the sensory information you have ever gathered.

When we look to the mouth of Christ, we find a spring that sends forth the clear mountain water of truth, to water an arid earth of lies. You may doubt your friends and family, even your own mind; but do not doubt one word that proceeds from the mouth of Christ.

Behold your God. We gaze into the mists.

Violent

But look again at Christ, and note his hands and feet. What are they not?

Verse 17: “hands that shed innocent blood;” and verse 18: “feet that make haste to run to evil.”

His hands are shedding innocent blood—or rather, innocent blood is shed from his hands, pinned as they are against the coarse wood of the cross. No blood was ever so innocent as Christ’s. How different than the selfishly violent!

We see religions which are willing to take the lives of others for their own gain; we saw it in the false Christianity of the crusades, and we see it today in the jihad of Islam. We should not be surprised—shedding innocent blood is as natural to fallen man as drinking water.

But look at Christ’s hands. They are the hands of a king and a warrior, they could this moment command more than twelve legions of angels in flaming fire to consume their enemies.¹⁵ But instead they are held to the cross.

By what? If you would say by iron nails, you are only half right. It was not a nail that held down the hand of Christ, but love. Religions, like the men who make them, are eager to take life for their own gain; Jesus is different. He gives his life for the gain of others. His hands are not violent; they are rough from their years of carpentry, and no doubt strong, but they are docile and kind in this moment of his death.

And his feet, they are not eager to run toward evil. See them there—they cannot run at all! They too are driven through by a Roman spike. These are beautiful feet that carry good news, that walked among the crowds and took the dusty trails of Palestine to bring tidings of salvation to his people.

¹⁵ Matthew 26:53.

They run to good, and when they are like this cut off from running, they still are about a good business.

Friends, when you look down at your own hands, do you see the blood that is on them? Can you tell me with a straight face that you have not defrauded another, or taken advantage of another, for your own gain? Have you not extended your hand to force from your neighbor what you wanted? Have your feet not run to get gain that should never have been yours?

Blood for blood! No, not your blood for the blood you have shed, but Christ's blood for the blood you have shed. You may like Pilate try to wash your hands of the blood that is on them; but that guilt will never be purged by any solvent of this earth. Only the innocent blood shed from the hands and feet of Christ can cure you.

And I tell you by the promise of Christ, by his tongue which cannot lie and that is surer than your own existence, if you will submerge your guilty hands by faith into the stream which proceeds from his wounds, you will be clean. You will come up from this Jordan like Naaman, free of your leprosy. You will no longer be subject to the anger and hatred of God in his wrath, but will be embraced by those broad arms of Christ outstretched on Calvary.

His hand is extended to you; will you take it? Take it! It has done all that is necessary for your felicity. Take hold of the hand of Jesus.

The heart of Christ

Do you still hesitate? Do you still doubt his good intentions?

Then turn with me to our final point this morning. See the last contrast fit into its place, completing the frame. Look at verse 18: "a heart that devises wicked plans."

Our hearts are desperately sick, says the prophet.¹⁶ Or as a later writer would say, our hearts are idol factories.¹⁷ It is as if we contained within ourselves an assembly line that produced evil plans at a consistent and efficient rate.

We are not third- but first-degree sinners, and we premeditate many of our iniquities before we commit them. Our schemes for contorting the truth, so that we can escape some consequence, are elaborate. We invent our alibis and enforce our corrupt decisions by a string of well crafted logic. We have the same heart as that child with chocolate

¹⁶ Jeremiah 17:9.

¹⁷ John Calvin.

smear across his face who denies he ate the forbidden cookie—only now we know to wipe the chocolate away.

This is the heart of natural born man. It is no blank slate, and it is not inclined to good. We have inherited from our forefather Adam a native corruption that contaminates the canals flowing through our minds and emotions. Live long enough, and you will grow weary of the human heart and its almost endless capacity for evil.

But now—and I regret we have so short a time to do it—but now let us look away from the heart of man, and toward the heart of God as man. If we were permitted to look past the eyes and tongue, past the hands and feet, and all the outward appearances of Jesus Christ, and to gaze directly into his heart, to see the fringe of the face of God, what would we see? What heart resides within the chest of Christ?

Take all that I have said of the natural human heart, and turn it inside out. Christ's heart is none of those things.

There are some who think that Christ is always contriving to make their lives miserable. Well, if you are in rebellion against him, this may well be so. Misery is meant to turn you to him.

But there are also those who have made peace with God by the blood of the cross, by a sincere faith in the work of Jesus, who yet think that Christ is ever concocting plans for their pain. You would not think so mean a thought about your friends on earth; but you think it of your Friend in heaven.

But look at his heart! Are you burdened by a load of care, crushed by a weight of guilt, though you have run to the arms of Christ for refuge? I fear then that the devil's poison has made its way into the well of your thought.

Have you not considered it suspicious that when you were alienated from God, you rarely felt guilt, even though you were immersed in your sins; but now that you have repented and are set to fighting against your sins, your sense of guilt is many times more than it ever was before? I will only say that it would be clever of the devil to keep rebels at peace so they seek no peace with Christ, and also to torment the consciences of God's children, to cast doubt upon the goodness of God's heart for them, so that their energy for his work is sapped.

Look on the heart of Christ. Pierced by the soldier's spear on the cross, it gushed blood and water. But do not think that now that his heart is healed, it keeps its contents to itself. Always it is emanating in love for you who are his brothers and sisters. Where once it poured blood, now it pours grace.

The heart of Christ is all we have in this world. It is our blanket in the cold, and our shade in the desert. It is what fuels our labors—the love of Christ controls us!¹⁸ And it is what calms and casts our fears. When we look about us, there is chaos beyond our control. But when we look at the heart of Christ—the heart of God!—we say to our souls, “It is well. This is enough.”

There is so much more to say about the person of Jesus Christ, and about God revealed in him, than we can say now—or than we can say ever, I imagine. But we have made an attempt up the mountain. May God bless it.

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:14.