Love and Hate in the Bible

Text: Psalm 5

Rev. David Waldron

Scriptures: Matt 5:38-48; Rev 19:11-16; Psalm 5

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL] 181; 176; 50(1-3,6-8); 5; 191 (5)

Series: Occasional

Theme: In his distress, David the psalmist prays to the LORD who hates the wicked, but loves those who love Him

Proposition: God hates the wicked who do not trust in Christ for salvation, however we are not God, nor, as individuals, his agents for executing judgement.

**Introduction**

The terrorist attack of 15th March here in Christchurch, or the bombings of churches and hotels in Sri Lanka over the Easter weekend, sadly testify to the evil and hatred which abounds in this fallen world. In many ways planet earth is a brutal murderous place where there is much hatred. It has been this way since our earliest ancestors, Adam and Eve, no longer loved God with all their heart, soul and might. The world today is not so very different from the way it was in the days of Noah when: **“***The earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence*” (Gen 6:11)

In the light of the recent shootings here in Christchurch, and other events there have been renewed calls for new laws to bring prosecutions against those deemed to have committed crimes of ‘hate speech’. Hate speech has been defined as “*a statement intended to demean and brutalize another. It is the use of cruel and derogatory language, often directed towards an individual or group*”.

There are calls from some people to define the Bible, or at least some parts of Scripture, as ‘hate speech’. In Psalm 5, our text for this morning, we read of God’s hatred for those who do evil - which raises some questions:

* In light of this, could the Bible be legitimately described as being ‘hate speech’?
* Is it true that God loves people, but not their sin?
* How should we respond to evil in a world where there is so much hatred?
* Are their circumstances in which we can rightly hate other people?

1. **The hatred of God (v4-6)**

Hatred is extreme dislike or aversion, detestation, abhorrence, animosity, loathing of somebody or something. In Psalm 5:4-6 David writes about the One true living God, the covenant God of Israel: “*For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you. The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;* ***you hate all evildoers****. You destroy those who speak lies; the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man*”. The first part is a deliberate understatement – God finds no pleasure, in crime, in wrongdoing, in wickedness.

The foundational wickedness in fallen humanity is pride – the desire to have oneself as number one authority in your own life. "*God opposes the proud*” (James 4:6a). The boastful cannot stand in the presence of God.

God has an aversion to the wicked. He detests those who do evil. He acts on this hatred, bringing destruction on the wicked. Is this because God is essentially hateful in his being? Could it be said that ‘God is hate?’ Absolutely not. This is diametrically in opposition to the truth that ‘*God is love’* (1 John 4:8).

So why then does God ‘hate all evildoers’? It is because God is perfectly righteous. God is perfectly good and only does what is good (Psalm 119:68). The hatred of God for the wicked is good and right because the wicked deserve God’s animosity, his loathing, his aversion to them. The wicked, the boastful in themselves, the evildoers, liars, violent and deceitful people deserve to be hated by God. They have no natural connection to Him, for they have all rebelled against his loving rule.

Is it true that God always ‘loves the sinner, but hates the sin’ No. It is clear from this psalm that God hates both the wicked **and** their wickedness. This is the clear teaching of the Bible. Not only here but elsewhere in Scripture. Consider also: “*The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence*” (Ps 11:5); “*There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers*” (Prov 6:16-19)

In order to try and reconcile the hatred of God as expressed in Scripture with the truth that ‘*God is love*’ (1 John 4:8), some people have come up with their own ‘solutions’ including:

1. Not all the Scripture is actually God’s Word. That is to say, not all of the Bible is true.
2. The God of the Old Testament is not the same as the God of the New Testament.
3. Christianity is just about Jesus who is meek and mild and loves everyone.

How should we respond to these things?

1. The Bible is all true. However, specific commands of God at different times in history are not always general commands for today. There is absolutely no call for the followers of Christ to act in violence and hatred against individual or people group. For example, the crusades initiated and sanctioned by the Western Church in the medieval period were wrong.
2. The God of the Bible is one God who never changes. However He has acted in different ways throughout history. His specific commands in the Old Testament are not all commands for today. We do not live under the theocratic government of Old Testament Israel and the civil laws of that time and place do not define our civil laws e.g. It would wrong to put to death someone who has committed adultery (ref. Lev 20:10-16). We live under the civil law of New Zealand.
3. There is a sense in which the whole Bible is about Jesus (e.g. Luke 24:27), however, Jesus Christ, whilst He is humble and gentle, is also the Judge of all people (Acts 10:42; 1 Cor 5:10; Acts 17:31; John 5:22). As we heard from Rev 19:11-16, He is coming in ferocity and force to execute judgement: “*From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty*” (Rev 19:15).

It is true that God hates both the wicked and their wickedness, however this is not the whole truth, because God also loves some of the wicked…which brings us to our 2nd point:

1. **The Love of God (v7,11-12)**

Love is the opposite of hatred. Love embodies friendship, fellowship, and acceptance. In this psalm, David writes about the love of God: v7 “*But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house*”. We don’t know the exact circumstances of David when he wrote Psalm 5. We don’t know if it was before or after he fathered his first child with Bathsheba. However, we do know that God loved this Old Testament king who the Bible describes as ‘*a man after God’s own heart*’ (Acts 13:22).

Yet we also know that David was an adulterer who deceitfully arranged for the husband of his mistress to be killed in order to hide his guilt. Was David not an evildoer? Yes, he was. Was David not a bloodthirsty and deceitful man? Yes, he was. If God hates the wicked, does he not hate David? No.

Why is this? Isn’t this a contradiction of what we’ve just seen in our first point? No. The reason being because David truly loved God; as we see in his repentance for his wickedness and his turning to God in humble faith and trust. He said: “*Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight*” (Psalm 51:4a). David feared the Lord. He knew that God is a God of justice. A God who hates the wicked and their wickedness. Yet he also knew that God is love and He loves with an abundant, steadfast love which is fully accepting of all those He loves.

David, the evildoer was acceptable to God and able to enter into fellowship with the LORD because God forgave him of his wickedness. David writes in v11-12: “*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you. For you bless the righteous, O LORD; you cover him with favour as with a shield*”. Through his repentance and ongoing trust in the Lord, David sought refuge and protection in God. Protection from the evil of his enemies. Not only those who desired to harm him, but also protection from his own natural fallen nature which waged war against his desire to be godly. God loved David the person, the sinner, but not his sin.

For all those who turn away from their wickedness and trust God to forgive them, whilst God’s hatred for their sin remains, but he loves those who find refuge in Him. For them it is true that God loves the sinner but hates the sin.

How then can God love the repentant, trusting sinner, even though he hates the sin which remains in them? Because the wrath of God against the wicked was poured out upon His own Son, whom He loves. This is the truth, the awful power, the wonder of the gospel.

In this psalm David cries out to the Lord for justice, for the wicked to be justly punished: v10 “*Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you*”.

The abundant, steadfast love of God is seen most vividly in His willingness to send his own willing Son to:

1. Bear the guilt of many.
2. Be cast out from the love of God because of the abundance of the transgressions of many.
3. To be counted as a rebel against God and deserving of his divine hatred.

This is why God loved David the sinner, whilst hating his sin. This is why brother and sister in Christ, God loves you, whilst still hating your sin. Because of Jesus Christ.

This is why I implore everyone here today to be sure that you have taken refuge in the protecting power of God by ‘loving his name’ and thereby being ‘exulted in him’. To ‘love God’s name’ is to love all that God is and all that He does with all your heart, soul and might. To love God’s name means firstly to hate your sin, then to turn from that sin and determine to strive against it with all your might as you trust in Jesus Christ, both as the One who died in your place that the justice of God would be satisfied and the One whose perfectly righteous life is credited to your account.

It is true that God hates both the wicked and their wickedness, however He does not hate **all** the wicked. Some He loves with an abundant, steadfast love which accepts them as they are, protects them and blesses them. These are the wicked who have become His children because He has placed His love on them. These are the wicked who show that they love God because they desire to turn away from their wickedness. These are the ones who trust in Jesus Christ. Are you one of these?

The Bible is God’s ‘love speech’ to a world of evil and hatred. ‘Love speech’ which calls the wicked to respond to God’s love conveyed through the sending of His Son Jesus Christ to bear the righteous hatred of God against rebels like you and me. The ‘love speech’ of God’s Word also directs us as to how we are called to respond to wickedness – which brings us to our 3rd point:

1. **Our response to evil (v1-3,7,8-10)**

In Psalm 5, David is responding to the evil he sees and experiences in a wicked world. We can learn much from this portion of God’s Word about how we are to respond to evil in the world today. We’re going to look at this in two parts: Firstly seeing how **we are** like David in many ways. Secondly seeing how **we are** **not** like David in some ways.

**Firstly**, we are like David, as people of flesh and blood who suffer in this fallen world. Brothers and sisters, we are like David, being in fellowship with God because He has chosen us and set his love on us, sending His own dear Son to die in our place. We are like David in prayer, worship, consecration (that is **“**the [solemn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual) dedication to a special purpose or service”), and trust.

Notice in v1-3 that David cries out to God in patient, expectant, persistent prayer at the start of the day: “*Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my groaning. Give attention to the sound of my cry, my King and my God, for to you do I pray. O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch*”.

David trusts in God as the Avenger against the wicked. Praying that God would act in just judgement against evildoers: v10 “*Make them bear their guilt, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; because of the abundance of their transgressions cast them out, for they have rebelled against you*”.

David reverently worships the Lord who loves him, v7 “*But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house. I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you*”. David desires to live a godly life before the wicked and knows that he needs the Lord’s guidance to do so: He prays in v8 “*Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies; make your way straight before me*”.

Here is a pattern to follow which gives us some Biblical ways in which you and I should respond to evil in this world:

1. Pray patiently, expectantly and persistently that God would act in judgement upon the wicked.
2. Worship the Lord in reverent fear, love and trust.
3. Desire to live a godly life by following the guidance of the Lord, with the aid of the Holy Spirit.

These are ways in which that you and I are like David, but **secondly,** there are some in which we are not: He was a unique person in history, the son of Jesse, who became the King of Israel for 40 years from 797BC to 837BC. The psalmist is God’s anointed King: He was God’s agent for temporal judgment – functioning in his leadership role over Israel as the ‘sword of God’ in the same way that all human governing authorities do – being instituted by God (Rom 13:1-4). In this sense, David was God’s servant wielding God’s ‘sword’ of justice upon the wicked. His enemies were God’s enemies. An attack on David was an attack on God, God’s Kingdom, God’s righteousness.

David wrote this, and other psalms in Scripture, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. His words here are God’s words, God’s holy speech. David could therefore rightly say: **“***I hate the assembly of evildoers*” (Ps 26:5); “*I hatethose who pay regard to worthless idols*” (Ps 31:6); “*Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred; I count them my enemies*” (Ps 139:21-22)

But you and I are **not** the anointed king of OT Israel, nor when we write, do we ever do so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to pen Scripture. David wrote of his hatred for evildoers, idolaters, enemies of God, however, **the Bible does not call you and I to hate anybody.**

King David was also both an ancestor and a type of King Jesus – a person whose calling and life (though imperfect) points forward to the perfect work and life of Christ (e.g. Matt 10:34; 13:40-43; Rev 19:11-16; 21:8). You and I are not ‘types’ of Jesus Christ in the way that David was.

Jesus is coming to execute God’s vengeance upon all his enemies who have not found refuge in Him just as David, during his reign, made war on God’s enemies. When human authors like David curse God’s enemies in Scripture, they are doing so under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The eternal fate of these enemies is known by God. When Christ called curses on cities and individuals, In His divinity He knew their eternal destiny.

But we do not know whether our enemies (those who oppose us because we follow Christ) will always remain so, or whether the Lord will have mercy and bring them to salvation. Just as He did with Saul, the early persecutor of the church who became the apostle Paul.

So whilst we can pray that God would bring our enemies and his to justice, praying that their punishment would justly fit their crime. We also pray that He would bless them with the same pardon that we (as former enemies of God) have received.

Scripture clearly teaches that avenging is not our role, for we are not God. We are never to seek personal revenge, as Jesus taught in the sermon on the Mount: “*Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*” (Matt 5:39). We are not to hate our enemies. Quite the opposite as Jesus says: “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*” (Matt 5:44).

As Christ’s disciples, who believe that His Word is the only rule for faith and life, we **do not hate** Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses or any other group. However, we do believe that these groups are making some serious theological and biblical errors.

Similarly we **do not hate** homosexuals, adulterers, pornographers, transsexuals, or fornicators. However, we do believe that those who commit such acts are immoral and ungodly in their behaviour.

The ‘love speech’ of the Bible is that although God hates the wicked and the wickedness that they practice, He loves all who turn in repentance away from their wickedness and trust in Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This is the message we are called to speak, even when an unbelieving world accuses us of ‘hate speech’ as we bring the gospel of God’s love for naturally wicked people like us.

AMEN