Jason Upchurch - Ecclesiastes 3:7 - A Time to Hate?

As we get close to the end of this poem, it's something like climbing to the top of a mountain: the closer you get to the end the more difficult it becomes.

And it's difficult because there are 2 things here we need to discuss. There is a time for hate and a time for war. Those are very difficult things for us to consider.

Love we know and peace we know. In fact, those are so ingrained into the Christian lifestyle and ethic that it's really really hard for us to imagine that there might be a time outside of those seasons. How can a Christian be for war? How is that possible? How can a Christian have hatred? How is that possible? Aren't we supposed to be anti-hate? Aren't we supposed to be peacemakers?

We're going to jump out of order just a little bit this morning. We'll talk about hatred then come back next week to talk about love and peace. And then talk about a time for war.

I'm just going to tell you right now that what we're about to talk about this morning is going to be hard if you haven't thought about a biblical theology of hatred. So we're going to see what the Bible says about hate.

And maybe you're wondering: Jason why are we coming to church to learn about hate? That sounds radical. Well, because this is what the passage we're looking at is talking about. Solomon says there's a time to hate. There is a God-appointed time where hatred is the proper response to a situation, and there are times where love is also the proper response.

Hatred here can mean to loathe, to dislike exceedingly, or occasionally sometimes simply to love less.

But there is a time to hate. That's a hard pill to swallow. John Calvin: Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which nothing is omitted that is both necessary and useful to know, so nothing is taught but what is expedient to know." Institutes.

Now, he was talking about the difficult doctrine of predestination. But it applies to any difficult issue in the Bible - hell, hatred, predestination, pick your difficult doctrine.

Everything we have here in the Bible is here on purpose. God has included it because it is necessary and useful. If it wasn't, he could have left it out. But he didn't - he put it here on purpose. So we need to understand that there are seasons for hate. Seasons of extreme displeasure against someone. Not sin, not vengeance, not slander and reviling. But deep emotional wrath and anger toward someone.

Now, I'm not going to do any fancy theologizing or acrobatics. We're going flip around a lot and just simply read the Bible. And I think it's going to be sobering and difficult. Especially if you've never seen these passages, buckle up. We just need to deal honestly with what the text of Scripture says.

So my contention this morning is that the Christian position is - and always has been - that there is a season for hate and a season for love. Usually we should respond in love. That's our default position. But occasionally hatred is the appropriate response.

I'm going to make that argument in 2 ways. First, hatred isn't sinful because God hates. If God hates, then hatred cannot be intrinsically sinful because then God would be guilty of sin.

Second we also see places where people hate and it's commended. So buckle up. Let's talk about God hating first.

Turn to Psalm 5:1-8 This is David talking about God's love and hatred in the same breath. God can hate with a holy hatred and he can love with a holy love. **Read 1-8**

If this is the first time you've read this psalm in a while, let that sink in. I want to make a couple of comments. First, God doesn't just hate sin. We hear that often: God hates the sin but loves the sinner. That's not what this says. It says God hates all evildoers.

And he abhors - hates - the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. God has severe displeasure, severe hatred for those who murder and those who lie. That's what it means to abhor something. He hates them. Not just their sin, but them. God doesn't cast sin into hell, he casts sinners into hell. Because the sinner is tied to their sin.

At the same time, David doesn't paint God as some ogre, some moral monster who just goes around hating things all day. How does David even enter into the house of God? **Read 7**

He enters in through the love of God. So God hates people, and he loves them and that happens as the exact same time. There's no contradiction here.

So let me just say again - if God does this then it cannot be intrinsically sinful. Otherwise God would cease to be God.

Turn to Psalm 11:1-7 Read

Same thing. David is surrounded by wicked people. Surrounded by people who are trying to attack him and kill him. He's got no hope. Who is on his side? God. God hates the wicked. In fact, did you see what David says in **Vs. 5 Read**

His soul hates the wicked. There's a visceral, internal hatred that God has to the wicked and especially the one who loves violence.

God is a God of peace and order. Anyone who wields violence is against God and God against him. And then, same thing we saw before - in the same breath that God hates the wicked, he loves the righteous and their deeds. **Read 7**

No contradiction. **Turn to Psalm 45:1-9**

This is a Messianic psalm - ultimately talking about Jesus. Hebrews 1 even quotes this as talking about Jesus. And this is important because every attribute of God the Father is true of God the Son and God the Spirit.

So there are some who believe that the Father is this mean angry God and the Son is a kind and gentle God and the Son sort of has to do damage control with the Father. Like good cop/bad cop. But that couldn't be further from the truth. What the Son sees the Father doing, the Son does likewise. The Son has all the same attitudes and attributes the Father does and we see that here. **Read 1-9**

Hebrews focuses in on verses 6-7 when it comes to Jesus. Jesus is the God who has loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God his God has anointed him.

So are there 2 gods? No. There's 1 God in 3 persons - the Bible is thoroughly Trinitarian. And the anointed one - Jesus Christ - loves righteousness and hates wickedness.

Turn to Proverbs 6:16-19 We're going to look at a lot of passages this morning because I need you to see these. I could just quote them. But I need to you to see them in the your BIble. Because of the weight of this I need you to see that I'm not taking things out of context, I'm not doing trickery with the word. This is just the plain teaching. **Read 16-19**

So again, it's not just the sin that God hates. These sins are all connected to people. In fact, they're given body parts to represent people. Eyes, tongues, hands, hearts, feet, breathing, sowing.

He hates the person with eyes, the person with a tongue, those whose hands shed blood. He hates the one who sows discord.

Hate here is an extreme displeasure. Abomination is usually revulsion over violations of morality. Witchcraft, idolatry, intermarriage, sexual immorality, hypocrisy of the wicked. And extreme, strong dislike and contrary attitude toward.

I want to show you one more concerning God. You probably know it: Jacob I loved but Esau I what? Hated. That's in **Malachi 1:1-5** so let's **turn** there.

The New Testament quotes this as well in **Rom. 9** to talk about the sovereign choice of God choosing Jacob over Esau. God gets to decide who he saves, not us. But I want us to see the original context here. Now, like we've seen so many times already, in the very same breath that God talks about love, he also talks about hate. They are not opposed. They are not at odds. **Read 1-5**

Three things. First, some people want to say that when God hates someone it just means he loves them less. It's not that he actually hates them, he just doesn't favor them as much. Is that what the passage says?

No. How does God show that hatred? He's destroyed Edom. Obliterated their society for how wicked they were to Israel. And then when they tried to rebuild, God destroyed them again. And he'll do it over and over and over because God is angry with them forever. And what that will show Israel is that God's love toward true Israel is eternal. **Read 4-5**

Second, again, God's love and God's hate are not at odds. They're mashed up together. How God shows his love toward Israel is how he treats Edom. Edom was wicked to Israel and God's hatred of them is good and proper. And I think this is important. God is love - **1 John 4** says that twice. He defines what love is. But he also properly hates the wicked. So we have to conclude that hatred doesn't contradict love, it establishes it.

Stick with me for a minute. In order to properly love something, you have to hate the thing that would destroy the object of your love.

Do you love your mom? Yes. So someone who threatens the life of your mom is now the proper object of your hatred.

Do you love your children? Yes. Then someone who would seek to harm them is now the proper object of your wrath and hatred. You don't treat that person sinfully. You don't do evil to that person. You treat them as justice demands. But you're not called to have warm and fuzzy feelings for them.

Let me put it a different way. If someone was in the act of murdering your wife and you just stood there going "well, I need to love this enemy who is killing my wife" would that actually be an act of love toward your wife? No. Of course not. You need to have the proper response to them for their evil action.

Third thing to mention, God's hatred of the wicked is exactly why we need the gospel. Listen, if you're not Christian, God is not happy with you. He does not have a wonderful plan for your life. He's not up in heaven just hoping you'll come to Jesus like a middle school kid is hoping a cute girl says yes to going to the dance.

No, **Psalm 7:11** says that the sovereign God of the universe is every day angry with the wicked.

We are objects of his wrath according to **Eph 2.** We are enemies of God according to **James 4.**

Rev 19:15: Jesus is going to come back and he will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Do you get that imagery? What do you do in a winepress? You stomp on grapes. You crush them. Jesus is going to crush his enemies - every unbeliever with the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

He won't stomp on people reluctantly. He won't stomp on them ignorantly. He won't stomp on the apologetically. He stomps with the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.

Which is why when we preach the gospel, people need to hear what's coming. In order to understand the good news of the gospel, they need to understand the bad news that God's wrath is pointed at them.

And the good news is that there's a way of escape. There's a way to not only avoid the wrath of God, but but to actually become his child. To go from hatred to love. What do you have to do? Nothing, actually. Jesus did it all for us. He kept every command we've broken. He paid for every sin we committed on the cross. He rose from death that takes us all. And he ascended to the throne of judgement as Lord.

And the good news is we simply believe in him. Believe he is the risen Lord, he is the one who took our sins upon himself on the cross. Believe the only righteousness we can show God is the righteousness Jesus earned. And we turn from our wicked way and follow him forever.

In wartime if one country has overwhelmed the other, they will often offer terms of peace. They don't have to. They could just wipe the other country out. But sometimes they offer terms of peace. God has graciously offered terms of peace. Trust in Jesus alone, your sins are forgiven and you're no longer God's enemy but God's son.

The gospel is the appeasing of God wrath through faith in the righteous work of Jesus Christ.

Okay, you say well that's fine. God hates. What does that have to do with me? Well, if God hates - if he has extreme displeasure at the wicked - then it's not evil. What about us? Solomon says there's a season for hate - for extreme displeasure, extreme opposition - does that apply to us? Yes it does.

We see throughout the Bible godly people who have righteous hatred.

Turn to Psalm 26:1-12. Now remember that the psalms are meant to be sung. The psalter is the songbook of the church. We can also sing hymns and spiritual songs but these are written down for us to sing. As you read the psalms, think about what we're singing. **Read 1-12**

So there's a disposition of hatred David has toward evildoers, those who are wicked, those who are liars, those who are hypocrites. He's sinning against them, he's not returning evil for evil, he's not wronging them like they are wronging him. He's not vile or wicked.

He's faithful, he's joyful even. He walks in integrity proclaiming the wondrous deeds of God.

So David hates evildoers. And I think it's okay for us to hate evildoers. The wicked who hate God and hate his people. Not sin against them, but have the proper attitude toward them.

And notice, he calls on God to test his heart and calls on God that his ways are innocent and pure. There's no contradictions here between the man who genuinely loves God and his good gifts and hating the wicked.

Turn to Psalm 31:3-8. Now this also is a Messianic psalm. Meaning David wrote it for himself, but it has prophetic fulfillment in Jesus. Jesus even quotes part of the psalm we'll read in a second. **Read 3-8**

So this is David trusting God in the midst of extreme persecution and even possible death. People are trying to trap him and kill him - just like they trapped Jesus and killed Jesus 1,000 years later.

And what's his attitude toward idolators? I hate those who pay regard to worthless idols, but I trust in the Lord.

Trust in the Lord, following Jesus, is not at odds with disdain for idolators. And that's what a person is who doesn't worship Jesus - they're an idolator. I don't think we need to hate every idolator. Jesus himself had compassion and grace on many people who were soft-hearted and repentant. But those who attack us and blaspheme Jesus, we can be okay looking forward to their judgement.

Remember in **2 Thess. 1** how does Paul comfort the Thessalonians who are being persecuted? He comforts them by reminding them that Jesus will come and destroy all their persecutors. What the persecutors are doing to Christians, Jesus is going to do to them. Hallelujah.

Turn to Psalm 97:1-12 Read

God is the giver of vengeance, he's the one who destroys the enemies. But it's clear: if we love God, we have to hate evil. You have to hate it. And not just in theory. The one who devises evil.

If you can sit there and watch people scam the elderly and be okay, that's not a Christian attitude.

If you can stand there and watch idolators blaspheme the name of Jesus and you're happy about it - that's not okay.

That should create a revulsion in us.

Turn Psalm 119:104, 113, 128, 163 Read

Turn to Psalm 139:19-24 Read

He just said he hates his enemies and then asks God to make sure his heart is pure. News flash: it is.

Prov 8:13: The fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate.

Amos 5:15: Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate.

Here's where we're at.

God hates, because he is righteous and good and holy. His hatred is not sinful, it actually is an expression of justice to those who are wicked.

We also hate because we love God who is righteous and good and holy. But here's the difference - this is huge - we don't express it through sinful actions.

We don't retaliate. We don't take up vigilante activity. We don't return evil for evil. We don't return insult for insult.

In the gospel, what happens is that we act like our heavenly Father acted toward us, who were his enemies.
Turn to Matt 5:43-48

I want to show you this in 2 places. The first are Jesus's famous words that have probably been ringing in your ears all morning. And what I want to show you here is that what Jesus calls us to is to personally treat those we hate with love. **Read 43-48**

So what do we see? Jesus is talking our actions here. Not our internal disposition toward wicked people. How do we know that? Because the example Jesus gives here isn't that the Father's wrath toward the wicked just disappears. No, he just acts in kindness. He gives the rain and sun even on his enemies. They are still his enemies. They're still wicked, but he does give grace.

And if we're his children we do the same. They're still our enemies, they're still wicked, but we show them kindness. How?

We pray for them. What do we pray? We could pray for their conversion that they would come to know Jesus.

We could pray for their conviction that they would face true justice before the law.

We can pray that their wickedness will come to an end. Proverbs talks about the traps that the wicked lay for others ensnare themselves.

We could pray - as Paul does in **2 Thess 1** that the Lord would cause their demise to be swift.

We can talk to the wicked. We can greet the wicked. We can be cordial to the wicked. We can pray for the wicked.

Something to keep in mind: in all the passages we read earlier, never once do we see David sinning against the wicked. We never see him taking vengeance. He doesn't slander them or resort to pettiness.

He asks God to destroy them. He asks God to work and act and punish, but he doesn't do it even though he's king and even though he could and everyone would probably support him.

There's the hate - the strong displeasure - but he leaves it all in God's hands. That's exactly what Jesus is saying to do.

Eph. 4:26: Be angry and do not what? Sin

Turn to Rom 12:9. Paul expands on this here. **Read 9**

Look at that. The NT isn't so different from the OT, is it? Command 1: love. Command 2: hate. It's like God wrote the whole Bible and it says the same thing all throughout. Shocker, I know.

Solomon said in **Ecc 3** there's a time to love and a time to hate. Paul says basically the same thing. You gotta know what is what to walk wisely. Here's the rest. **Read 9-13**

This is how to love. It needs to be genuine. Without hypocrisy. We are to love the brother - Christians - with a tender affection like you'd love your own family.

We honor each other, rejoice together contribute as people have need.

The next paragraph sprinkles in more of how we love, but also the limit of what we can do in our hatred of evil. We are commanded to abhor - hate - what is evil. And there are some evil things out there and some evil people. But God set limits on our response. What the limits. **Read 14**

First limit is what we say to them. Bless them and don't curse them. Even though they are our enemy, we don't curse them. We don't revile them. Or speak evil of them. **Read 15-17**

We don't repay them evil for evil. We don't retaliate in like manner. When they sin against us, we don't sin back. We might defend ourselves, we might speak truth in a difficult matter, we might take legal action or even self defensive action. But we don't do evil.

We always do what is honorable. **Read 18**

We seek to live at peace with our enemies. We're not looking for a fight. We're not looking to undermine them or sabotage them. We try to live at peace even with those who attack us. **Read 19-21**

We don't get vengeance. We're not vigilantes. We're not seeking payback. That's God's work. And God pays people back through the civic process - courts and law and judgment through magistrates. We use that process. We can take people to court. We can charge them with crimes, we can sue them for civil charges if the law allows. But God's vengeance is worked out through the government, and ultimately through his own judgment on the last day.

How do we treat our enemies? And, again, the Bible affirms we have enemies. The Bible affirms there are wicked people who do wicked things that deserve swift judgment. How do we treat them? With grace. Feed them. Give them something to drink. That's hard.

But isn't that what the Father did to us when we were wicked sinners who were under his wrath? Yes.

One last thing. **Read 21**

This is super important as we close. Hatred can consume you. People really do wrong us. We live in a disgustingly sinful world and some people are sinned against in the worst ways. All kinds of abuse. All kinds of crimes and murder and filthiness.

Sometimes people hear "well, it's okay to hate" and they take it and it becomes their downfall. They are overcome by the evil that has happened to them. Some of you have had very evil things happen to you or to those you love. Don't be overcome by evil. Don't let that be the foundation of your life.

Jesus, who is merciful and kind, is the foundation of your life. Jesus who took all the wrath you deserve for your sins is the foundation. Don't be overcome by evil, overcome evil with good.

Pray