
Hatred For Sin

By David Wilkerson

October 17, 1994 I want to tell you about an anointed servant of God who hated sin as few people ever have. His hatred for evil was so passionate, so intense he was ready to kill all transgressors.

I am speaking of Saul, the first king of Israel! No person in the Old Testament expressed a greater hatred for sin than did Saul.

The Philistines invaded Israel, perhaps to test the resolve of the newly appointed king. They came at Israel in three separate companies, attacking on three different flanks. A cowardice spread among the Israelite soldiers - and they began fleeing to caves, dens, and rocks to hide from the enemy.

Saul was left with only six hundred fighters. And, they were badly outnumbered and poorly armed: "...there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people that were with Saul and Jonathan: but with Saul and with Jonathan his son was there found [weapons]" (1 Samuel 13:22).

Saul and his motley army sat under some trees, wondering what to do. Meanwhile, Jonathan and his armor-bearer slipped away from the camp to plan their own strategy. This young son of Saul was a godly man, full of faith. He told his helper: "...there is no restraint (limitation) to the Lord to save by many or by few" (14:6).

The pair seaked off to a placed near Michmash, where they saw a company of Philistine soldiers on a ridge above them. Jonathan stood up, exposing himself to the soldiers, and they dared him to come up. Somehow, he and his armor-bearer climbed up the steep rock ledge and surprised the enemy soldiers. Almost immediately, they slew twenty Philistines!

When the slaughter was accomplished, the rest of the Philistine soldiers panicked. Evidently, there was a narrow passageway out of that battlefield, and the soldiers got bottled up in it. Scripture says they trembled and shook, and even began to fight with one another: "And there was trembling in the host...and they went on beating down one another" (verses 15-16).

One of Saul's sentries heard the motion. Looking down into the valley, he saw two men putting the Philistines to chase. He called out to Saul, who came and looked upon the scene. Saul couldn't figure out who the two soldiers were. So he ordered his officers, "See who among us is missing." A head count was made, and a soldier reported back to Saul: "Jonathan and his armor-bearer are gone!"

When Saul heard this, he and his army joined the battle. Suddenly, all the deserting Israelites emerged from the dens, rocks and cave hideouts. And they ended up chasing away the Philistines!

In the heat of battle, however, Saul gave a rash command. He said to his soldiers:

"...Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening, that I may be avenged on mine enemies. So none of the people tasted any food" (verse 24). He had commanded, "Let no one stop to eat until this battle is finished!" It was a foolish statement to make.

Of course, Jonathan hadn't heard the command. And, while he was fighting in a wooded area, he came upon some trees where a supply of honey was dripping to the ground. He poked his rod into one of the honeywells and enjoyed a refreshing mouthful. Immediately, his eyes enlightened, and he was energized for battle.

That evening, after the battle, the ravenous Israelite army dove into the spoils. They slew sheep and oxen on the ground, and they chomped on meat that still had blood in it. Both of these actions were contrary to the law.

Someone saw this happening and reported it to Saul. The king was horrified. He knew that the law required animals to be killed off the ground and their blood to be drained. Suddenly, an indignation and rage filled him. He commanded everyone to gather around him, and he roared: "...Ye have transgressed: roll a great stone unto me this day" (verse 33). (The phrase "this day" in Hebrew actually means "This very moment - immediately!")

Saul was saying, "God is offended! You have grieved Him! This is outright, blatant sin. Quick - there is no time lose! Bring me a large stone. And, every one of you, bring your cattle and slay them on the stone. Let the blood drain from the animals, and don't eat any meat with blood in it. Do it right!"

I can visualize the scene: Saul stands indignantly by the altar he erected, while the Israelites came forward, shame-faced and sheepish. He shakes his head and says to his captains, "How could they do such a thing? Are they really that stupid? I can't allow the wrath of God to fall on this nation. This has to be made right!" He was outraged!

That night the soldiers were weary traumatized from the battle. They wanted to go home. But, they hadn't done a major mop-up of the Philistines. They had won only a partial victory.

Saul demanded they return to battle and chase the Philistines all night. He said, "We're not sleeping tonight! We're going to fight until I'm avenged of my enemies!"

But the priest suggested, "Let's consult the Lord first." The Bible says "And Saul asked counsel of God, Shall I go down after the Philistines? Wilt thou deliver them into the hand of Israel? But he answered him not that day" (verse 37).

Once more, Saul's hatred for sin was aroused. He raged, "God isn't speaking because He's mad at us! Somebody has sinned - and I'm going to find out who it is. I will not allow sin to go on among God's people. Line up, everybody - Israel on one side, and my son and me on the other."

Scripture says they cast lots, and the lot fell to Saul and Jonathan. "...And Saul and Jonathan were taken..." (verse 41). The king and his son had been isolated. So Saul turned to Jonathan and said, "So, it's you!" "...Tell me what thou has done..." (verse 43). "What did you do, Jonathan? Have you sinned?"

Now, Saul already had told the people, "So help me God, even if the guilty party is my own son, he will die!" I ask you - how's that for a rage against sin?

Jonathan looked at his father incredulously and asked, "You mean, you want to kill me because I tasted a little honey?" But Saul was unbending. He stood strong in his hatred for sin and cried out, "...thou shalt surely die, Jonathan" (verse 44). He commanded his officers to take Jonathan out and kill him. But the soldiers stepped in and rescued him!

Beloved, here is a picture of an anointed servant of God, expressing an uncompromising hatred for sin. But there is something tragically wrong here! You see? Saul hated sin in the congregation. And he hated sin in his family. But he excused the awful sin in his own heart! He hated only the sin of others!

Saul should have been in mourning over his own sins. He had just had an encounter with the prophet, Samuel, who had exposed his sinfulness. The prophet had rebuked him for his foolishness, disobedience, impatience, and rebellion. At this point, Saul should have said, "If anyone needs judging, it's me!" But he still had a rage for the holiness of God - and against the unrighteousness of the people!

I want to tell you what's behind the "kingdom dominion" gospel in America today. The driving force behind the doctrines of these "Reconstructionists" - those who want to revert to Old Testament laws - is an intense hatred for the corporate sins of America!

The key leaders of Reconstructionism say our society is rotting, decaying, out of control - and the only way back to sanity is to return to the law. They literally want to bring back Moses' commands: "Stone abortionists! And stone any girl who's had an abortion! Do as the Muslims do - cut off the hands of those who steal! Forty stripes on the bare backs of the abusers! Death to all drug pushers and rapists! No mercy - no compassion for transgressors!

Talk about rage against sin. Yet, tellingly, there is no mention of punishment for one's own personal sins!

One of the Reconstructionism's major writers took exception to the prophecies I wrote in my book, *Set the Trumpet to Thy Mouth*. He wrote me several venomous letters about it. When I read them, I could hardly believe he was a Christian.

This man writes book after book raging against sin in America - and yet he smokes and drinks! He says he feels the "burden to cleanse modern society" but he won't cleanse himself of his own sinful habits!

I call this the Saul Syndrome. It is characterized by a hatred for the sins of society, the sins of the church, the sins of others - but no grief over one's own sins!

Even the Most Righteous Among Us has a Tendency to Hate Others' Sins While Being Blind to His Own! David was a man of God who hated sin with everything in him. He said, "...I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104). "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil..." (97:10). Yet, this same man committed adultery with Bathsheba. And he sent her husband to his death in battle!

The Bible says Bathsheba "...mourned for her husband" (2 Samuel 11:26). Think of the hurt and guilt this poor woman must have carried. She had cheated on her husband, and now she was without him. I don't think she had any idea that her secret lover, David, had plotted her husband's death!

David's sin had "displeased the Lord" (verse 27). He had seduced Bathsheba, planned her husband's death, and then deceived her by acting if he was doing the right thing (that is, marrying her after he'd impregnated her). So, ten months after the affair, God sent Nathan the prophet to deal with David's sin (see 2 Samuel 12).

Nathan came to David's court pretending to represent a poor man who had been terribly misused. He told the king, "There's a man in this kingdom who is very wealthy. And a friend of his came to visit him. The friend was hungry after his journey and needed something to eat.

"Now, this wealthy man had a lot of sheep. His neighbor, on the other hand, had only one little lamb.

And it was the family pet. That little lamb ate and slept with the family. They loved it.

"But, rather than send out one of his servants to fetch one of his own sheep, this rich man went over and stole his neighbor's little pet lamb. And he killed it and fed it to his visiting friend."

David was enraged. He told Nathan, "So help me, that man is dead! He's going to die!" (The Hebrew here reads, "He is worthy of death.") Then David added, "That man is also going to restore the lamb fourfold!" He raged against this awful sin. Oh, how he hated sin!

Yet, beloved, do you see how unconfessed sin in a child of God produces an unrighteous, unholy indignation against sin in others? If you have hidden sin, as David did, you'll feel an indignation against others' sins. Hidden sin begets a "religious spirit" - that is, a judging spirit!

Years ago, during a repentance conference our ministry held, a pastor's wife came to us. She confided, "My husband is quite well-known in holiness churches as a powerful holiness preacher. He thunders against makeup on women, going to movies, improper dress. But, he's a big phony - he's hooked on pornography! He never faces his own sin!" This man preached legalism to cover up his own vicious, hidden sin!

Jesus said, "...why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or, how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matthew 7:2-5).

Paul wrote, "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?" (Romans 2:21-22).

I believe all godly saints must have a genuine hatred for sin. And all true shepherds must cry out against sin and compromise. But a pure hatred for sin must come out of a heart that has been probed, searched, and judged itself!

David cried out against sin and compromise: "Do I not hate them, O Lord that hate thee? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies" (Psalm 139:21-22).

This bold statement came out of a repentant, broken spirit - because David had already examined his own heart! In the next verse he says, "Search me, O God, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me..." (verses 23-24).

We are so unlike Jesus in venting our hatred for sin in others. We want judgment to fall on them, but God wants mercy. We want to call down fire from heaven on transgressors - but God wants to forgive and reconcile all sinners.

I never could have been a prophet who preached mercy to King Manasseh. He filled Jerusalem with blood by sending thousands of screaming babies to the belly of Molech. If God had sent me to that wretched man to encourage and reconcile him, I would have thundered at him instead!

Yet, the Bible says Manasseh repented. Even so, I wouldn't have believed his tears. All I would have

heard were the screams of the babies. And all I would have thought about was what he'd done to corrupt that society.

But I wouldn't have known about all his sleepless nights. I wouldn't have seen the terror in his eyes or heard his haunting cries. I wouldn't have believed that God could still love that sinner. But He did. And Scripture says He had mercy on Manasseh.

Nathan the Prophet Shows Us God's Way of Dealing with Fallen, Sinful Saints! Nathan knew David had sinned. He knew David was involved in murder, lies, cover-up, deception. Yet, Nathan loved David. He wasn't anxious to expose him. He wanted to save him!

Nathan didn't go around David's court whispering to his associates and servants, "We need to pray for the king. A woman is trying to seduce him, and he's caught in her trap. I've got such a burden for David!"

Don't be fooled: This kind of talk is plain, outright gossip! And it is made worse by being clothed in pious words such as "prayer," "concern," and "love." May God have mercy on those who spread this kind of talk. I wouldn't want to be in their shoes!

I believe Nathan spent months praying for David. He truly hated David's sin. He knew the Lord does not wink at sin, and that sin has consequences. And he knew David was living a lie - that he had disregarded the name of the Lord.

Nathan also knew of David's fear. David had refused to go to battle; he hid in the palace instead. He had lost all his fight. He was afraid an enemy arrow might strike him - and he'd have to face God with unconfessed sin!

I want to make an important point here: God made the first move toward David! He initiated the first step toward reconciliation. You see, when believers sin against the Lord, we tend to hide from Him. We feel unworthy, as if we'll never measure up to His holy standard. So we hide, just as Adam and Eve hid when they sinned.

But God went after Adam and Eve. He tenderly asked them, "Why do you hide from Me?" In other words, "Why are you trying to destroy our fellowship, our communion?"

Likewise, God sent Nathan to David. He missed the intimate fellowship He had with His servant. But David was hiding from God because of guilt, fear, and condemnation. So God waited and waited - until finally he said, "If he's not coming to Me, then I'll go to him." So, He sent Nathan. And it is in God's approach to David that we discover His heart toward all fallen saints!

I used to preach about Nathan's exposure of David in an entirely different way. I have the sermon on tape - but I cringe when I listen to it now because I delivered it in the wrong spirit. I had a rage against sin that wasn't tempered by the mercy of God!

I used to thunder, "There sits David, thinking he has gotten away with sin. He goes on with business as usual - sporting around with his stolen wife, as if nothing is wrong.

"But here comes that mighty man of God, Nathan, full of holy zeal! He marches in and tells David the story of the stolen lamb. Then he looks David in the eye, points a bony finger in his face and

thunders, "You are the man! You have transgressed God's law and brought shame on His name. It's all over - your sin has found you out. Shame on you! Repent!"

Isn't this the way you might have exposed David? "Praise God - sin has to be exposed! Our leaders have to be pure, spotless!"

But that is not how it happened with David - because that is not how God deals with His fallen, beloved servants! Rather, God had already told Nathan that David was forgiven. He told the prophet to go to him with a message of reconciliation: "When you tell David what I've told you, he'll think he's going to die on the spot. But you've got to tell him he's forgiven - that he's not going to die! Tell him also that I will walk him through everything that comes upon him because of his sin."

I believe Nathan spoke to David in a spirit of reconciliation - soft-spoken and respectful - as he told the story of the stolen lamb. He hoped David would see himself as the man in the story, bow his head and admit, "Oh, Nathan - you're talking about me."

Instead, David raged with indignation! And now I see Nathan walking slowly to a window, his heart broken. He turns sadly and says with grief in his quivering voice, "David - you're the man. You're the one who took another man's pet lamb."

"Look at all God has done for you - all the blessings He's given you. The Lord was ready to give you all your heart's desires. But you've killed an innocent man - and you've taken his wife as your own. You have despised the Lord, David. And the enemies of God are rejoicing over what you did."

"I'm sorry to tell you this - but the sword is not going to leave your home. Your wives will be taken from you. And God will do all of this before Israel. You will be publicly judged. There are consequences to your sin."

God, in His love, had to make David see the utter horribleness of his sin. Then, suddenly, all of David's pent-up feelings poured out of him. He prayed out all the guilt, fears, and sorrows of those ten long months: "Oh, Nathan, I've sinned against God!" It wasn't the prophet who was screaming - it was David. He felt wrath falling upon him - because God had exposed everything!

David never thought he'd gotten away with sin. On the contrary, he was a very troubled, guilt-ridden man. As you read Psalm 51, you hear him praying out all the fears he'd carried in his heart. He had witnessed what sin had done to Saul - and he was afraid it was happening to him!

- "...take not thy holy spirit from me" (Psalm 51:11). David was afraid God had left him - just as He'd left Saul!
- "...renew a right spirit within me" (verse 10). He knew an evil spirit had come upon Saul, and he didn't want that to happen to him.
- "Restore unto me...joy..." (verse 12). David had lost all his joy and peace.
- "Cast me not away from thy presence..." (verse 11). He had been hiding, afraid to come to the Lord's presence. He felt cast away completely!

David faced all his fears. And now Nathan brought to him the message from God's heart: "...The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die" (2 Samuel 12:13). It was time to be reconciled. The Lord missed David's fellowship and wanted him back!

God sees the terrible agony that sin brings to fallen people. He grieves over the way we run from Him when we're under sin's guilt. He knows all about our fear of being cast away - of being lost, of never being right again. And He gets no pleasure from seeing us writhe in agony over our sin. He doesn't sit by and say, "Let him suffer a little more. When he really feels the pain, then I'll come rushing in."

No! The Lord has been waiting all along for you to come back to Him and be forgiven! And after so long a time, He will no longer wait - He will make the first move. He will send somebody after you who will come not to rebuke you but to reconcile you to God's heart. The Lord will tell you, "Yes, you hurt Me, you despised Me. You were impatient and ungrateful. But I want to forgive you. I want you back in My arms!

Indeed, Nathan told the king, "David, I've got good news for you. The Lord has forgiven you." David must have wondered, "But - how can I stand before a holy God?" The prophet answered, "You're not going to die - you're going to live."

"For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee" (Psalm 86:5).

I don't pretend to understand the mercy and grace of God. It is completely beyond me. David was forgiven and restored - and Bathsheba bore him a son, whom God named Solomon. "...and the Lord loved him" (2 Samuel 12:24). I ask you: How could this be? Who can comprehend such mercy?

The next thing we see is that David regained all his lost courage. He got his fight back! He responded to Joab's call to come against the city of Rabbah, and Israel won a great victory there. King David returned to Jerusalem in great honor. God had completely restored him!

Don't be mistaken: David suffered greatly. Indeed, he paid a grave price. You see, he ended up paying those four lambs that he himself had set as restitution. Those lambs were Bathsheba's baby and three other sons - Ammon, Absalom, and Adonijah. All of them died.

Yet, even as David suffered these judgments as he consequence of his sins, the Lord comforted him in his sorrow. When he reaped what he'd sown, the Spirit of God helped him through it all. After each trial, he was comforted.

When you repent of your sin and are broken before the Lord, He sees you through every step of the painful consequences. His mercy, grace, and goodness enable you to bear it all with hope.

I Have a Few Final Questions for You:

1. How do you hate sin? In what tone of voice do you express your hatred for it? And is that hatred tempered with mercy?
2. Are you as tough on yourself as you are on others?

"For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13). If you have shown no mercy to others, you will be shown no mercy!

I realize that Jesus called the Pharisees snakes and vipers. And, yes, John the Baptist pointed out Herod's sin and called him a fox. The apostle Paul publicly rebuked sorcerers, and he named proud sinners by name. And I agree that prophets must cry aloud, spare not, and show God's people their iniquities.

But these words were spoken to people who didn't have repentant hearts - who had pharisaical attitudes and fierce pride. This message, on the other hand, is about how God deals with sin and failure in those who are sorry, broken, and repentant: "...Ye...have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy" (5:11).

If you've fallen, yet you have a repentant, broken spirit - it doesn't matter how badly you've failed God. He will come after you to reconcile you, because He sees your broken heart. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17). That is the difference!

Heavenly Father, help us all to recognize when the heart of a fallen brother or sister is repentant. And help us forgive as You do - to seek full reconciliation and restoration for all of Your saints. Amen!

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