

What God Hates

There are several challenging passages in the Bible where we learn what God hates. These are hard to square for all of us who know and pray to a loving God. How could God who Himself is love-hate-which seems love's very opposite? Well just as bright light casts a shadow, so is love accompanied by hate. In fact in order to love most deeply, by definition we simultaneously must hate whatever ruins that love. For example: If you deeply love the innocence and beauty of young children, you must deeply hate abuse and neglect of such innocents. If you love the truth, you must hate lies and mistruth. If you love human flourishing you must hate war and dictatorship. Well God deeply loves human beings, so it makes sense that God hates one of our worst tendencies. God hates our human pride. Now remember this hate is a reflex, an echo of his love. God hates pride because it replaces our greatest self with something much less wonderful and beautiful.

God's hatred of pride is all over Holy Scripture. "Everyone who is arrogant is an abomination to the Lord,"(Pr 16:5) we read in Proverbs. "What is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God."(Lk 16:15) Jesus reaffirms. Pride has always been and will always be the fatal flaw of humans, that's why it's the first deadly sin we confess and the church names it the queen of sins. Pride is a nation killer, a family killer and a you and me killer. It is also a church killer, which we see in St. Paul's writings this month to the church in Corinth. Spiritual pride, ethnic pride, family pride is dividing the church, and Paul exposes it all to the light of day. You are arrogant, says Paul, your knowledge puffs you up, but God will cut you down. Pride puffs up, but love builds up. So let no one boast in the presence of God.

What made Paul great, however, is he doesn't just attack the problem, he engages everyone in the solution; 'Therefore, as it is written,' says Paul 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.' What Paul acknowledges here in just a few words is that though our pride is unacceptable, it is understandable. It is even spiritual. Since God designed us, it must be that we have a God-given desire to boast about something great. So the problem then, isn't boasting, the problem is boasting of the wrong things. Somehow in our sinfulness we forgot how to boast in God, to rightfully call the greatest thing the greatest. Instead of boasting in the all powerful, all knowing God, we boast about our world's puny displays of power and intelligence. Our brand new car or shiny motorcycle. Our biceps that look like grapefruits, or our attractive body. Our advanced degree, or phenomenal wealth, or our business acumen. If we mentioning these things didn't tweak you, maybe your pride is under control in these things. But what if I said that likely the most damaging pride in this place, which God hates, is our Armenian pride, our ethnic pride. Ah, now that cuts closer to home. We have gotten so used to thinking of Armenian pride as a positive thing, we forget that we confess this

sin of pride each week and that God hates all human pride. Why would this exclude Armenian pride?

I know many of you hate me saying this. But remember, hate is the flip side of love. God hates Armenian pride, he doesn't hate Armenians. He loves Armenians, but he hates our tendency to worship ourselves and not him. He hates that we worship the gift of our Armenianness rather than He, the Giver. He hates Armenian pride, because it makes us weaker. It makes us overconfident and underprepared. It keeps us isolated instead of connected to others. It keeps us competitive and backstabbing instead of cooperative. God hates Armenian pride, American pride, priestly pride, Democratic and Republican pride precisely because he loves Armenians, Americans, priests, Democrats & Republicans, and he wants us to find the true way to fulfillment and joy. And so in his wisdom, God blocks all the roads that humankind builds to heaven which rely on our own power, heritage or creed, and puts in its place the narrow gate and hard road which is the way of the cross. We are asked to reorient ourselves to this way today on the threshold of the season of the cross.

This way of the cross is the world's strongest medicine against pride. Just picture any billionaire of the world, or celebrity, or politician-Armenian, American or African-well dressed and well groomed. Now imagine them being taken out to the outskirts of a great city to the garbage dump to behold a naked man hanging by the nails through his wrists, gasping for his last breaths, and being told, "This, sir, is wisdom and righteousness and holiness and redemption. Will you kneel down here and cast yourself on His mercy?" In other words, God has chosen a way of salvation that devastates human pride. "That! You want me to bow down before that! Do you see my wealth and my power over others? You think I need that! Do you see the superpowers of the world, how their power and wealth dominates, and you want my people to bow to this? Who do you think we are?"

Yes the cross is God's great killer of pride, ethnic, personal or professional, and thus his great instrument of love. Through it, God opens a way to glory that proud men and women find it hard to take. Is this because God hates the children he has made? Of course not. God loves us dearly and so therefore he hates our pride. In blocking our prideful ways, he merely blocks the road to unhappiness. He tries to reroute us onto the humble way of the cross, which is the only route to glory and to God. So then let us be careful with our boasting, meditating on Paul's words that we'll read next Sunday, the Sunday of the Cross. 'But God forbid that I should boast' says Paul, 'except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.' Let this be our only boast, for there is no greater life, no greater joy than to boast in God, now and always amen.

This sermon adapted from John Piper's [Let Him Who Boasts Boast in the Lord](#)