

THREE THINGS THAT MAKE GOD ANGRY

A note on the Scripture text that being used in this study: The *American Standard Version* and the *New International Version*, along with the original Greek and Hebrew, have been used in an effort to achieve the greatest degree of accuracy and clarity. Where words or phrases have been added to the original text in an effort to better express its meaning, those words or phrases have usually been indicated by means of [brackets].

Introduction

What makes you angry?

Have you ever heard about an act of injustice or read about an act of wrongdoing and exclaimed, "That makes me mad!"? What is your reaction to such accounts as these: A young woman is paralyzed in an auto accident; rather than support her, her husband files for divorce. A faithful Christian teacher with an excellent reputation is one day falsely and maliciously accused of child abuse, and consequently, an unjust shadow is cast over her reputation. A colleague, operating out of jealousy, gives a former co-worker a bad reference and thus cheats him out of a job he desperately needs.

When we witness acts of injustice or wrongdoing it should make us angry! After all, we have been created in the image of God with the moral capacity to respond to right and wrong.

Some people are appalled to hear that God gets angry. They prefer to view Him as some sort of neutral impersonal cosmic force, or as a benevolent grandfather figure who tolerates moral offence with a condescending acceptance. But the fact is, the LORD is a personal and infinitely moral Being who is aroused to righteous anger when He beholds evil and wrongdoing.

Look at your own response to evil, injustice, wrong doing—especially when it is perpetrated against yourself—and observe the way you react. Now remember that you react the way you do because you are a moral being created in the image of God. Now you gain a better understanding of how God—as an absolute moral Being—reacts to evil and wrongdoing. Let us now consider Three Things that Make God Angry, as they are presented to us in the Book of Proverbs.

I. Avoid the Life of Pride and Perversity (Proverbs 6:16-19; Proverbs 11:20; Proverbs 15:9)

There are six things that Jehovah hates; indeed, seven things that are detestable to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to

mischief, ¹⁹a false witness who utters lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers. (Prov. 6:16-19)

Listed among the things God hates and that are detestable to His soul are *“haughty eyes”*—a look and expression that conveys arrogant pride and contempt for others: *“A haughty look and a proud heart—the lamp of the wicked* [i.e.; the spirit that emanates from the core of their being] *—is sin”* (Prov. 21:4.) The LORD declares, *“Whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not tolerate”* (Psl. 101:5b.) Let us examine ourselves and ask, Do I look down on others? Do I act as though I were superior to them? Do I view others as being below my social or intellectual stature? Do I think them to be unworthy of my time or association or friendship?

Also found in this list of abominations is *“a heart that devises wicked schemes.”* The Russian dictator, Joseph Stalin, once remarked, “To choose one’s victim, to prepare one’s plans minutely, to stake an implacable vengeance, and then go to bed ... there is nothing sweeter in the world.” Such is an extraordinary testimony of *“a heart that devises wicked schemes.”* Proverbs 24:1-2 elaborates on this particular abomination: *“Do not be envious of evil men, or desire to be with them; ²for their heart studies oppression and their lips speak of mischief.”* Do you lie in bed at night thinking of how you can get back at people who have wronged you? Do you meditate on ways to take advantage of the naïve and the helpless?

Another form of conduct found among those actions and attitudes that are detestable to the LORD are *“feet that are swift in running to mischief”*—i.e.; a fascination with mischief, a strong desire to witness calamity, as is seen by those who run to witness a riot or a brawl. Do you indulge that base desire to witness mischief and calamity? Do you find it “entertaining” to witness the sufferings of another person?

Yet another form of conduct included in the list of those things that are detestable to the LORD is the man *“who sows discord among brothers.”* Most detestable of all to the LORD is the one who goes about the devilish work of purposely disrupting unity and seeking to create divisions among brothers—in other words, among those who are at peace with one another. Out of spite, or envy, or jealousy, do you ever seek to create discord between friends? By means of gossip or malicious rumors or exaggerations, do you ever disrupt the unity of Christ’s body?

They who are perverse in heart are detestable to Jehovah; but those whose ways are blameless are his delight. (Prov. 11:20)

We must never lose sight of the fact that the LORD looks at the heart: *“[Jehovah] does not see as man sees; man looks at the outward appearance, but Jehovah looks at the heart”* (1 Sam. 16:7.) When the LORD observes a heart that is “perverse”—a heart that is false, crooked and deceitful, a heart that lacks sincerity and integrity—the LORD finds such a heart to be detestable to Him (something that is

morally repugnant to Him.) May the prayer of the Psalmist be our prayer: *“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. ²⁴See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting”* (Psl. 139:23-24.)

The way of the wicked is detestable to Jehovah; but he loves those who follow righteousness. (Prov. 15:9)

The proverb literally reads, *“Detestable to Jehovah is the way of the wicked”*—the word *“detestable”* is placed at the head of the sentence for emphasis. So often we fail to appreciate how morally repulsive and intolerable sin is in the sight of our holy God. Consider the testimony of Psalm 7:11, *“God is a righteous judge, a God who has indignation every day.”* Or, again, note Habakkuk 1:13a, *“Your eyes are too pure to look upon evil; you cannot tolerate wrong.”* All too often sin is called by another name (“a mistake” “a failure” “a shortcoming,”) it is excused, or even condoned—and the attribute of God’s love is wrongly conceived of as a great cloud that fills the heavens and blots out the brilliance of the sun of God’s holiness. May the Holy Spirit be gracious to impress upon our hearts and minds the full force of God’s Word: ***“Detestable to Jehovah is the way of the wicked.”***

II. Avoid the Practice of Deceit and Injustice (Proverbs 6:16-19; Proverbs 11:1; Proverbs 17:15)

There are six things that Jehovah hates; indeed, seven things that are detestable to him: ¹⁷haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are swift in running to mischief, ¹⁹a false witness who utters lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers. (Prov. 6:16-19)

Among the six, indeed, seven things the LORD hates we find *“a lying tongue”*—the practice of deceit; resorting to deceit for personal advancement or as an effort to escape the painful consequences of sinful or irresponsible conduct.

Deceit is a characteristic of the devil: *“the devil ... was a murderer from the beginning and is not established in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he is speaking in accordance with his own nature; because he is a liar and the father of lies”* (Jn. 8:44.) Deceit is contrary to the character of God: *“God is not a man, that he should lie; nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he spoken, and will he not act? Or has he promised, and will he not fulfill it?”* (Num. 23:19.)

Proverbs 6:16-19 also makes mention of *“a false witness”*—the use of deceit to oppose righteousness and pervert justice. Zechariah 8:16-17 declares, *“These are the things you are to do: Speak the truth to each other, and execute the judgment of truth and peace in your courts; ¹⁷do not plot evil against your neighbor, and do not love to swear falsely. I hate all this, declares Jehovah.”* Note that Zechariah combines *“the judgment of truth and peace.”* Truth practiced in the courts

contributes to a stable peaceful society, where men can have confidence in the legal system to execute justice. But where truth is no longer the foundation of the legal system, men lose confidence in the government, often times resulting in the taking of justice or vengeance into their own hands and thereby depriving the society of peace and stability.

A dishonest scale is detestable to Jehovah, but a just weight is his delight.
(Prov. 11:1)

In conjunction with Proverbs 11:1 let us take note of Proverbs 20:10, *“Differing weights and differing measures—both of them are detestable to Jehovah.”* *“Differing weights and differing measures”* refer to the practice of using two different sets of measurements: the dealer would employ the heavy set when he was buying (so as to gain a greater quantity) and the light set when he was selling (so as to give the purchaser a lesser quantity.)

These proverbs remind us that there is no part of life that is exempt from the concern and the lordship of Christ: there can be no division of life into the religious and the secular. By way of illustration: Life is not like the water-tight compartments of a ship’s hull; on the contrary, all of life is lived in the presence of God and is to be lived for the glory of God, as the Apostle Paul reminds the Corinthian church: *“whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

When the LORD beholds unscrupulous, unjust, deceitful practices—lying to a client, cheating at school, stealing from an employer—He regards them as a detestable offense against His own moral integrity and His righteous standard of justice. Such practices may be viewed as insignificant in the eyes of men, or may be condoned as an “acceptable” form of conducting business, but they are detestable in the eyes of God. In regard to this matter, let us take to heart the commandment of Deuteronomy:

You shall not have two differing weights in your bag—one heavy, one light. ¹⁴You shall not have two differing measures in your house—one large, one small. ¹⁵You shall have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land Jehovah your God is giving you; ¹⁶for Jehovah your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly. (Deut. 25:13-16)

He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous—both of them are detestable to Jehovah. (Prov. 17:15)

Here is a total inversion of justice, a total disregard for righteousness. By way of example, consider the case of Ahab and Naboth, where the wicked queen Jezebel coerced the leaders of the community to abuse the justice system by bringing false accusations against Naboth so that he might be executed and his prize vineyard might be taken over by king Ahab who coveted it:

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him. ⁹In those letters she wrote: Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. ¹⁰But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death. ¹¹So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. (1 Kg. 21:8-11)

This perverse state of affairs in which men “*acquit the wicked for a bribe, and deny justice to the innocent*” (Isa. 5:23) arises as a result of a disregard for God's warning of judgment, as becomes evident from Isaiah 5:19, “*Woe to those who say, Let God hurry, let him be quick to do his work, so that we may see it! Let that which the Holy One has determined to do come and occur, so that we may experience it!*” Here is a reference to those in Israel who mocked the prophets when they warned of the LORD's coming judgment, and who were so confident that it was an idle threat that they even challenged the LORD to perform His judgment immediately. Furthermore, such a perverse state of affairs as is described in Isaiah 5:23 is caused by a departure from God's moral standard, as Isaiah 5:20-21 reveals: “*Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness, who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!*” ²¹*Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*” Being “*wise in their own eyes*” means to be so arrogant as to abandon God's moral standard and think that men can establish their own standard according to their own will and desire; men utterly pervert the moral standard of God and perversely exalt the opposite of what is good and holy.

The disregard of righteousness, the perversion of justice—whether on a national level or in our own personal lives—is detestable to the LORD and shall not go unpunished:

Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw, and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their root will decay and their blossom will blow away like dust, because they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. ²⁵Therefore, the anger of Jehovah burns against his people; his hand is raised against them and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like filth in the streets. (Isa. 5:24-25a)

III. Avoid the Offering of Worship Without Obedience (Proverbs 15:8; Proverbs 21:27; Proverbs 28:9)

The sacrifice offered by the wicked is detestable to Jehovah; but the prayer of the upright is his delight. (Prov. 15:8)

The bringing of a sacrifice is an act of worship, but when that worship is offered by “*the wicked*”—one who is not submitting his will to God's will, one who is

living in disregard of and willful disobedience against God's commandments—that act of worship is detestable in the sight of God.

Judging yourself by God's standard, how acceptable is your worship to the LORD? Do you profess your love for God, but hate your neighbor? Do you ask God's forgiveness, but refuse to forgive your sister? Do you sing of God's holiness and purity, but elsewhere tell crude jokes and use all manner of vulgar, filthy language?

The sacrifice offered by the wicked is detestable, how much more so when he offers it with an evil intent! (Prov. 21:27)

It is bad enough when there is an unholy distinction between life and worship; when the formal worship is offered up to God but the life is not offered up to Him. But it is even worse when that worship is offered up with an unholy motive. Do you come to church to worship God because He is worthy of worship and because you love Him? Or, do you come to church to manipulate God? Perhaps there is the effort to purchase forgiveness in exchange for a financial contribution; or an effort to secure divine favor and blessing in exchange for an hour of singing and praying. Or, do you come to church to use God? Attendance at church is a good way to gain and maintain respectability in the community, or it may be a necessary means of maintaining tranquility among church-going relatives.

He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, surely his prayer is detestable. (Prov. 28:9)

The point of this proverb simply stated is this: If you are unwilling to listen to the LORD, He is unwilling to listen to your prayers.

If you dismiss God's holiness and majesty and lordship, merely seeking to use God to meet your needs, to acquire your desires, to gain your objectives, God will view such prayer as an abomination. Wouldn't you view it in the same way if someone addressed you in a similar way and with similar motives?

To offer up worship unto God without a life of devotion is detestable to the LORD:

Does Jehovah delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of Jehovah? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams; ²³for rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. (1 Sam. 15:22-23a)

Conclusion

Let us never lose sight of the fact that the LORD our God is a personal and an absolutely moral Being who is aroused to righteous anger when He beholds evil and disobedience.

From the Book of Proverbs we have considered three things in particular that make God angry—three things He identifies as being detestable in His holy sight: 1) the life of pride and perversity; 2) the practice of deceit and injustice; and 3) the offering of worship without obedience.

Relying upon His grace, let us seek to avoid such things and render unto God their opposites: 1) a life of humility and purity; 2) the practice of integrity and justice; and 3) the offering of worship and obedience.