

Seven Gates to Hell

Dan Wheeler

It is common today to reject strong preaching—to say that one should be lifted up, not beaten down. The cry is that we should only “preach Christ” and there seems to be Scripture for this—“nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). In reality, to preach Christ includes telling the hearers things that Christ does not want us to do: “Whom we preach, **warning** every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28, emp. added). [All Scripture references are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.]

It is a grave responsibility of the preacher to warn his audience of God’s judgment; to neglect to do so will cost the souls of the hearers and the preacher himself. God tells his messenger, “When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to **warn** the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Ezek. 3:18, emp. added).

Part of getting to know a person is finding out his or her likes or dislikes. We are not always perfect on knowing everything. I thought my dear wife, Grace, would like the cell phone I picked out for her. I was wrong.

Learning more about the will of God includes learning what He likes and what He dislikes. If we guess

SEVEN GATES TO HELL

about it, we could be very wrong. Jesus said, "What is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luke 16:15).

What do you know about what God likes? According to one extremist religious group, God hates America, hates soldiers, hates children, homosexuals and anyone who speaks up against this group. At their protests held at military funerals, they hold up signs that say, "Thank God for dead soldiers," "Thank God for September 11," and "Don't pray for America."

If we really want to know what God hates, we should read His word. We find it in the Book of Proverbs, which says, "These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). Here is a closer look at these seven things which God hates.

A PROUD LOOK

The first thing mentioned is "a proud look." The Bible says that God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5). Pride has been the downfall of many people in the Bible, both Old and New Testament.

Ahithophel was a counselor to David, who switched his loyalty to the rebellious son, Absalom. His word was practically "gospel." Apparently he let this go to his head, for he was devastated by an incident when his advice was ignored. In fact, when he saw that they did not follow his advice, he killed himself (2 Sam. 17). Pride was his ruin.

Nebuchadnezzar was the mighty ruler of Babylon. However, he let it go to his head, and when he looked over

his kingdom, he said, "By my power and might I have gotten this." God reduced him to an animal-like existence until he learned that the God of Heaven is the one who gives the kingdom to whom He wills (see Daniel 4:29-33). He was blessed that God put him through a learning experience so that his attitude would be better.

Naaman was a good man, a captain of the Syrian army. But he was a leper. When the prophet Elisha told him to wash in the Jordan River to be cleansed from his leprosy, he became incensed, thinking that there were far better rivers than the Jordan. His pride delayed him from being obedient and thus cleansed. When he finally humbled himself and dipped in the Jordan seven times, he received the blessing that God provided (see 2 Kings 5).

Why is pride listed first? Because pride is the root of crime. A young man raised in a Christian home who got in major trouble with the law confessed, "Pride caused me to think I could get away with it." Pride is the root of perversion, because it causes people to not glorify God and it causes them to be unthankful (cf. Rom. 1:21).

Pride has kept many souls from heaven and therefore served as a gateway to hell. It has been the reason for not obeying the gospel of Christ in immersion for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) and for not worshipping with the Lord's church in simple New Testament worship (John 4:24).

A LYING TONGUE

Another thing that God hates is "a lying tongue." The first recorded lie spoken by man in the Bible—Cain's denial of responsibility for murdering his brother (Gen. 4:9)—was done for self-preservation. Cain thought his denial would keep him out of trouble, and that pattern continues to this day. People lie for all kinds of reasons,

SEVEN GATES TO HELL

not the least of which is hoping to avoid hot water. But lying is only a temporary patch. Problems actually get much bigger. One lie leads to another, and it will be much worse for the liar than if he or she had told the truth. Jesus said, “There is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed” (Luke 12:2). If public relations spokespersons would understand this principle, things would be a lot better for them—and for us.

We rationalize that if we’re not hurting anyone with a statement that is not technically true, it is a white lie—and we chuckle about it. We’re not really being bad. But lies do not come in different colors. They are all categorized together as a gateway to hell if we do not repent. Near the end of the Revelation, we read a list describing those people who will be rejected from God’s holy heaven, and liars are included in the same list as murders. The final destination for all liars who do not repent is the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8).

HANDS THAT SHED INNOCENT BLOOD

In addition to pride and lying, God hates violence. We don’t have to go very far to understand that there are many violent people in this world—we can just open up the newspaper. It’s nothing new, of course—the first man-spoken lie was preceded by the first murder (Gen. 4).

Note that this passage does not teach that it is always wrong to kill. In fact, we can find a variety of circumstances under which someone committed homicide but was not culpable—for example, capital punishment (Rom. 13:4). Those who advocate that a woman has a right to an abortion often claim that there is hypocrisy on the part of pro-life advocates who believe in death row. But the key to understanding God’s perspective on homicide is

that it is the taking of an innocent life that constitutes murder (Prov. 6:17; Isa. 59:7).

AN HEART THAT DEVISETH WICKED IMAGINATIONS

Mankind has had heart problems from early in history. Just before the great flood, the condition of society was that “every imagination of the thoughts of man’s heart was continually evil” (Gen. 6:5). Since that time, heart problems have been the root of much of our trouble. Wrongdoing typically originates as an attitude problem. The word “heart” is found over 80 times in the book of Proverbs. If we are wise, we will keep examining ourselves to see if our hearts are right. The inspired writer says, “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). A heart that devises evil (constantly thinking up new ways to commit sin) is something that God hates because it will keep one from repenting when confronted with sin. The beloved David was a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), and this is why David sought to do God’s will and repent when he learned that he had done wrong.

FEET THAT BE SWIFT IN RUNNING TO MISCHIEF

The actions of those whose hearts are constantly planning evil quickly follow; they are quick to find some mischief. Nice people seem to be at a disadvantage because we can be taken advantage of easily. Years ago, in New York City, the crime was so bad that a car with the keys left in the ignition would last about 45 seconds before it was stolen. Today, we face terrorism due to people who are scheming to do evil. The prophet Isaiah describes the

SEVEN GATES TO HELL

condition of the people of the day in a similar fashion: “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths” (Isa. 59:7).

In sum, Solomon has described five different ways that people behave in terms of how they misuse their bodies. In contrast, each one of us should use our body for God by presenting it a living sacrifice in His service (Rom. 12:1-2).

A FALSE WITNESS THAT SPEAKETH LIES

The last two things that God hates that are listed here have to do with man’s behavior in society: a false witness and troublemaking. The sin of bearing false witness is prohibited by the ninth of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:16). It is not just a matter of lying; it is the sin of getting other people in trouble. It is a sin that contributed to the imprisonment of Paul when he was falsely accused of defiling the temple (Acts 21:26-30). It is a sin that directly contributed to the crucifixion of Jesus (Matt. 26:59-61).

It is a sin that has hurt innocent people today. Recently, a teacher and coach was accused of sexual misconduct with a female student. He was arrested and went to trial. Eventually, he was exonerated because the student admitted that she had made up the whole thing. Meanwhile, this man lost his wife through divorce, was alienated from his children, lost his job and lost his reputation. The damage has been done to him, and the sin of false witness destroyed his life.

False witness is a sin that we can be guilty of when we pay more heed to rumors about others and spread gossip. It can be overcome by loving others enough to apply the “golden rule” (Matt. 7:12). We should treat

others as we want to be treated, and that means to not spread lies.

HE THAT SOWETH DISCORD AMONG BRETHREN

Finally, we learn from Proverbs 6 that God hates troublemakers, especially when it disrupts harmony among brethren. Throughout time, many good works have been nullified in the eyes of the community because the church has conflict that will not be peaceably resolved. It is a serious sin, so we need to be honest with ourselves. Are we contending for the faith or are we being contentious? Are we guilty of manipulation of others in the church to get our way by pitting a person against the other? Have we put words in the mouth of our preacher or elders when talking to someone else? Are we striving to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3)? When sharing bad news in the church, ask yourself, “Why am I telling this?” And follow up with these time-tested questions: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it necessary? In addition, remember that gossip requires a talker and a listener.

CONCLUSION

Yes, it is true our God of love (1 John 4:8) hates certain things. But God hates the things that will keep us out of heaven. Nothing will enter heaven that would defile it (Rev. 21:27), because He is pure.

If we forsake these sins and obey Christ in baptism, we will be cleansed through His blood (Rev. 1:5). If we walk in the light through confession of sin and being faithful, we will enjoy the joy of being heaven bound. If we learn to hate what God hates, our lives can be lived for His glory and for our salvation.

SEVEN GATES TO HELL

Dan Wheeler preaches for the Concord Street church of Christ in Orlando, Florida.