

People trapped in these thoughts begin to wonder, “Why should I not kill myself?” This whole way of thinking is of the flesh, not the Holy Spirit. This is worldly despair, not faith in God’s Word.

What then is it to hate your life? Hating your own life involves hating your own sinfulness and sin. Every disciple of Jesus Christ must and does hate his or her old man of sin, the old nature. Paul laments in Romans 7, “in me (that is, in my flesh), dwelleth no good thing” (18) and “what I hate, that do I” (15)! Thus Christ’s command to hate your life includes hating the old man, the evil source of all your evil thoughts and lusts and words and deeds, and your sinful works. God hates them and you do too!

God’s children hate themselves *as those who are sinful and who sin*. Job confessed, “I abhor [or loathe and detest] myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:6). Isaiah exclaimed, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts” (6:5).

True Christian disciples also hate their own self-righteousness. The Apostle Paul explains, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Phil. 3:7-8). We loathe these things because they would rob us of righteousness in, and fellowship with, the Lord Jesus.

Those who follow their Saviour, in hating their own lives, detest and reject those things which hold them back from serving Him wholly. If you cannot control the use of your television (which is quite possible) or if your children can’t control the use of your TV (very possible), then either establish, maintain and enforce clear, godly guidelines or get rid of your television. If you or your children are watching sinful DVDs or listening to ungodly music, remember that the local council collects your bin once a week or fortnight. Thrust this rubbish away from you, for Jesus Christ is also Lord of your “entertainment.”

The incarnate Son of God instructs us, “Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on” (Matt. 6:25). Matthew 6:19-34, in the Sermon on the Mount, explains more fully the things included in your “own life” in Luke 14:26.

The kingdom of God takes priority over food and drink, clothing and shelter. In His first temptation, Christ was urged by Satan to turn stones into bread. His fitting response was: “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). On another occasion, the Lord declared, “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head” (Luke 9:58).

So if you are faced with starvation or renouncing Christ, or with losing your home or apostatizing, you must cling to the Saviour and let all these things go, for discipleship is the call to hate your life and the things of your life.

Rev. Stewart

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Hating Your Own Life (1)

In Luke 14:26, the Lord Jesus teaches that each one of us must “hate” his or her “own life.” But what does this mean?

Especially given contemporary forms of expression, it ought to be said, first, what hating your own life does not mean. It does not require or encourage the following attitudes or speech: “I hate the way I look—my hair, my face, my body!” “I hate my wardrobe; I have nothing nice to put on!” “I hate being unpopular at school; no one likes me; I have no friends!” “I hate having no boyfriend or girlfriend; nobody wants me!”

Others complain, “My marriage is no good. I am trapped in it. I wish I could leave him [or her]!” “My children get me down!” “My house is a dump. Who in their right mind would like to live here?” “I hate my job; I don’t want to be stuck doing this for the rest of my life!” or “I hate not having a job!”

Others hate their bad health or their disabilities or their being old.

Sadly, there are many people who hate their place in the world. They lament that they have no money, no future, nothing to look forward to, no joy and no peace.

This is not what our Lord is referring to when He said that we must hate our own lives. What I have been describing is the self-pity that we can so easily slide into when, contrary to Romans 8:31, we think things are against us, when we take our eyes off the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the God of all grace.

This is a very dangerous thing, beloved, because you are moving away from faith in the Triune God and the greatness of your salvation in the cross of Christ. You are also forgetting about other people and your calling towards them. You are indulging in self-pity. Constant worrying about yourself and your problems rapidly spirals deeper into self-absorption.

It is hard, if not impossible, to think or say, “I hate my job, I hate my marriage, I hate the way I look, I hate everything!” without blaming God. After all, He is the sovereign Lord over all things. His testimony is that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). However, the sinful “hating” described above is a loud protest: “No, they don’t! At least not for me!” But think what you are saying! You are contradicting God’s holy Word!

I have explained especially what hating your “own life” does not mean because hating your life, in the way spoken of above, is characteristic of those afflicted with depression. Hating one’s life, in this sense, will lead to suicidal thoughts. For if you hate A, B, C, etc.—that is, if you hate your “life”—why would you want to continue to live?

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Is Grace Resistible? (2)

In the last *News*, I began an answer to a question that arose in a debate the questioner had with an Arminian who denied that the grace of God in salvation was irresistible. Grace, he said, was resistible: it could be resisted and frequently is resisted. The Arminian referred to two texts.

The one reads, “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live” (Deut. 30:6).

The other text is found in John 12:47: “And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.”

The argument of the Arminian in connection with John 12:47 is: “Grace is not irresistible, because otherwise the whole world would be saved ... This text is good [i.e., proves his point, he thinks] because it gives no chance to the Calvinist to say that the word ‘world’ means ‘world of the elect ...’ The text cannot be talking about the internal or external call. The text says that Jesus came to save the world.”

I turn first to Deuteronomy 30:6. I have some trouble understanding how this text overthrows the truth of irresistible grace. It seems to me that it teaches exactly the opposite. If the sovereign Lord God circumcises one’s heart, and gives physical circumcision as a sign and seal of the circumcision of the heart, then circumcision is a sign and seal of what God does, not what we do. If God circumcises our hearts, we are saved.

It is possible that the Arminian means that the rite of circumcision itself gives grace to everyone circumcised and that, because all who are circumcised are not saved, those who are not saved have successfully resisted the grace of God.

But the text does not say that all who are physically circumcised receive grace. It does emphatically assert that the reality of which circumcision is a sign and seal, that is, the circumcision of the hearts, results in salvation. The point is that circumcision itself does not save; nor does the text say anything like that. Circumcision is but a sign and a seal. The grace given that saves, of which circumcision is only a sign, is not resistible. It is God’s grace and God’s grace saves.

The fact is that the rite of circumcision, which was replaced by baptism in the new covenant (Col. 2:11-13), was performed on all male members of Israel because they all belonged to the old testament church. Circumcision was an outward sign of the inward working of grace. It accompanied the gospel preached to Israel. And just as the gospel was heard by all, the sign accompanying the gospel was performed on all. But just as the preaching of the gospel did not give grace to all who heard it, so also circumcision did not give grace to all who were circumcised. Nor does water baptism give grace to all who are baptized.

We must never forget what Paul says in Romans 9:6: “For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” God Himself makes the difference between Israel as a nation and the true Israel of God. He makes that distinction by sovereign election and reprobation.

And so, Paul writes, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). God’s Israel are the elect, not everybody in the nation. Paul explains in detail what he meant in Romans 9:6 in Galatians 3. Arminians wish that Romans 9 and Galatians 3 were not in the Bible.

In John 12:47, the Arminian seems to me to hang his argument on the word “world,” as if that word referred to all men who have ever lived, are living now and will live in the future.

I feel a little embarrassed even discussing this point, for hundreds of biblical theologians and saints, beginning with Augustine who died in AD 430, have proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the word “world” in connection with Christ’s work, never means every man who ever lived or will live. The literature is so extensive that the books would fill shelf upon shelf in any library. Why does the truth have to be repeated time and time again, without number? It is obvious that if one wants to make the word “world” refer to all men head for head, not even the angel Gabriel could change his mind.

I think it was the Baptist, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who said that not once in all of Scripture does the word “world” mean every man, head for head.

I recall a noted theologian in the Presbyterian tradition who was speaking on the truth that Christ died only for the elect. He took his seat while people were preparing questions. As was to be expected, one young man, newly out of graduate school, said, “Yes, but doctor, what about John 3:16?” The theologian all but exploded out of his chair and ran to the lectern. In an palpably disgusted voice, he said, “Every man? The world is constituted, as the text says, of believers! Read it, young man. Believers constitute the world!” With that, he turned and sat down.

If grace is resistible, then Christ died in vain. Christ’s death on the cross paid for all the sins of those for whom He died. Christ’s perfect sacrifice earned full salvation for those for whom He died. Does anyone dare to say that Christ died for someone who goes to hell? It seems to me that that comes very close to blasphemy.

Christ died for the true world of the elect. The elect are, according to such passages as Ephesians 2:20-22, the temple of God built upon Christ the Cornerstone. The reprobate are the scaffolding that is necessary for the erection of the building but which is torn down when the building is complete.

The elect are the corn kernels and not the root, the stalk, the tassel, the husks or the cob. All are necessary for the corn to grow and ripen, but are useless when the corn is picked and eaten.

The church is God’s true world redeemed in Christ. They are surely saved by God’s irresistible grace.

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