

**Proverbs**  
***Proverbial Abominations I***

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Sunday, June 13, 2010

Text:

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,  
but he loves him who pursues righteousness (15:9)

**Introduction**

We like to speak about the loving kindness and the tender mercies of our God, especially as they are made so evident in the forgiveness of sins. One of the highest glories of the gospel is the unfathomable riches of the grace of God in reconciling to himself such brutish sinners as ourselves.

And it is right to like to speak about these things. We do well to emphasize them. But we should realize that apart from what we might call God's *sterner* attributes—his holiness, righteousness, and justice—these other attributes of grace and mercy have no meaning. They are void of all content and significance.

Mercy is a perfectly meaningless concept in a world where there is no justice. If there is no justice, there can be no such thing as mercy, because to be merciful is to be disposed to forgive an offender. But if there is no justice, which is to say no enforcing of the law, which is in effect to say there is no law, then there can be no mercy. Where there is no law enforced there are no offenses to forgive; and so mercy becomes meaningless.

It is only as we understand that God is incomparably holy—"Holy, holy, holy

is the Lord God the Almighty” (Rev. 4:8)—only as we understand that he is incomparably righteous and altogether just, that we can have any sense of what is meant by his grace and mercy.

So although we like to talk about the grace and mercy of God, we have to do so against the backdrop of his righteousness and justice. We can often only come to understand and appreciate things when we see them in contrast to their opposites.

It is often the case that in a jewelry store you will see diamonds displayed on black velvet...

So too, when we consider the grace and mercy of God, we must see them against the backdrop of his righteousness and justice.

Today we are going to consider a topic that is related to these attributes. We are going to consider what Proverbs has to say concerning things that are an abomination to the Lord.

### **Meaning and use of “Abomination”**

Now, the first thing we must do is define this word “abomination” and show how it is related to God’s holiness.

Old Testament scholar Bruce Waltke helps us to understand the meaning and use of the word. He writes:

In usage *tô'ēbâ* denotes those persons, things, or practices that offend another’s sensibilities.

In other words, something is deemed to be an abomination if it is repulsive or disgusting. It may be aesthetically repulsive, meaning repugnant to our sense of beauty; but normally the word is used for that which is *morally* repugnant. It refers to that which offends the *moral* sensibility, so that it is most often used in an *ethical* sense.

You can see, then, how this is related to the holiness of God. God is absolutely holy. He is perfect in his righteousness. As John says, "He is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn. 1:5). And this intrinsic righteousness of God is the standard by which we are to live. When we fail to do so—when we fall short of this standard—we have sinned.

Now, all sins are sinful, but not all sins are *equally* sinful.

This becomes apparent when we remember what Jesus said about blaspheming the Holy Spirit. He said,

Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. And whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come (Matt 12:31-32)

The very fact that there is a sin that God will not forgive shows that not all sins are equally sinful. Blasphemy against the Son of Man, God will forgive when there is due repentance. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit...no.

Perhaps this is what the apostle John has in mind when he says,

If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask, and God will give him life—to those who commit sins that do not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death; I do not say that

one should pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin that does not lead to death (1 Jn. 5:16-17)

There are many differences of opinion as to what exactly John means by "sins leading to death", and what Jesus means by "blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." But by the very circumstance that John categorizes sins as those leading to death, and those not leading to death, and Jesus speaks of at least one sin being unforgivable, shows that not all sins are equally sinful.

We should also consider the fact that Jesus spoke of some matters of the law as being "weightier" (of more importance) than others.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others (Matt. 23:23)

In the Law of Moses we see that God has assigned different penalties to different crimes. Some of these penalties are more severe than others, showing that he regards some crimes to be more serious than others.

Remember, too, that Jesus said it would be "more tolerable" for the Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for the Jewish cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and that it would be more tolerable for Sodom than for Capernaum (Matt. 11:20-24). And the reason was this: these Jewish cities sinned against greater knowledge. They had the very Son of God in their midst. They heard his teaching and saw his miracles, and still they refused to repent. Consequently, their guilt was far greater than the guilt of these Gentile cities and so their punishment would be greater, too.

When we consider the nature of various sins, we can see that some sins are inherently more harmful and destructive, and therefore more serious than

others. For instance, who can doubt that a violation of the sixth commandment is more harmful than a violation of the tenth? To commit murder is more serious and destructive than to covet your neighbor's donkey. And a murderer will be more severely punished by God than will a covetous man.

It is true that all sins are sinful, but not all sins are equally sinful. All sins are sinful, but some things are truly abominable. That is, they are particularly sinful. God doesn't throw this word abomination about casually; but he singles out some things for special attention as being especially deserving of this epithet.

Now, Waltke goes on to say,

Hence, that which is "abominable" is relative to the character, values, or culture of an individual.

In other words, what one person deems to be abominable is not necessarily what someone else might deem to be so. It depends upon the character and values of the individual. We can see this very clearly in **Proverbs 29:27**.

An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous,  
but one whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked.

The unrighteous offend the sensibilities of the righteous, and the righteous offend the sensibilities of the unrighteous. They have exactly the same reaction to exactly opposite things. Why is this? How can it be? It's because they have exactly opposite characters.

Waltke goes on to say,

One displays his own character or values by that which repulses him.  
(B. K. Waltke, in ISBE, vol. 1, p. 13)

This is true, isn't it? We learn as much about a person by what he hates as by what he loves. If he hates that which is evil, he is a good man. If he hates that which is good, he is a bad man. Consider what Solomon says in 13:19b, "to turn away from evil is an abomination to fools." To turn away from evil is a good thing. But to turn away from evil is an abomination to a fool. He hates that which he *should* love. And in hating what he should love, his character is revealed. We learn what kind of a man he is. He is not merely foolish; he is wicked.

### **What God finds Abominable**

God finds many things abominable, detestable, loathsome, revolting, repulsive. And by considering what these things are, we can learn a great deal about him and about his character. And we can more thoroughly train our moral sensibilities to match his.

Proverbs has much to say about things that are an abomination to the Lord. But Proverbs is not the only book that mentions what God finds abominable.

#### *In Other Portions of the Bible*

(1) The practice of idolatry is an abomination to the Lord.

Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an *abomination to the LORD*, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret (Deut. 27:15)

And the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the mount of corruption, built for Ashtoreth *the abomination* of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh *the abomination* of Moab, and for Milcom *the abomination* of the Ammonites (2 Ki. 23:13)

Even the gold and silver belonging to the idols are an abomination to the Lord.

The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall *utterly detest and abhor* it, for it is devoted to destruction (Deut. 7:25-26)

Now, here we find a biblical explanation of what it means to find something abominable—you shall *utterly detest and abhor it*. First, the idol is called an abomination. Then we are told to detest and abhor it.

Practices that are associated with idolatry are also an abomination in God's eyes (**Deut. 18:9-14**).

(2) Sexual perversion is an abomination to the Lord

In the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus the Lord gives us a detailed list of forbidden sexual practices, including incest, homosexual behavior, and bestiality, and he refers to all these things as abominations. The Lord warns Israel,

**Lev. 18:24-30**

*In Proverbs*

Now let's look more particularly at Proverbs, and let's begin with a passage that we have touched on briefly before.

There are six things that the LORD hates,  
seven that are an abomination to him:

There are more than this, really, but it's put in this form for literary reasons, to emphasize in this passage, these seven sins. It served Solomon's purpose in instructing his son.

There are six things that the LORD hates,  
seven that are an abomination to him:  
haughty eyes, a lying tongue,  
and hands that shed innocent blood,  
a heart that devises wicked plans,  
feet that make haste to run to evil,  
a false witness who breathes out lies,  
and one who sows discord among brothers (6:15-19)

We will try to organize what we have to say around these seven things that the Lord hates.

(1) God Hates Haughty Eyes

We have already spoken about the fool and his pride in a previous message, and so we will not go over all of that again. We will only add here that not only is pride a foolish thing, it is a hateful thing as well. God despises it. "Haughty eyes" or an arrogant look is mentioned here as one of the things the Lord hates.

Of course haughty eyes proceed from an arrogant heart.

Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD;  
be assured, he will not go unpunished (16:5).

Pride and arrogance and the way of evil  
and perverted speech I hate (8:13)

David says,

The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;  
you hate all evildoers (Ps. 5:5)

James, the brother of our Lord, says, "God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (Jas. 4:6). Peter says the same thing, and then adds, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you" (1 Pet. 5:6).

The arrogant are begging God to humble them. And he will humble them, unless they repent of their pride. And let me tell you, it is better to humble yourself than to be humbled by the Lord. It's much less painful and embarrassing. (Nebuchadnezzar; David)

So then the Lord hates, he abhors, haughty eyes and a proud heart.

(2) God Hates a Lying Tongue

In Isaiah 65, the Lord is twice called “the God of truth.” He Lord loves truth and those who speak the truth. And because this is so, lying lips are an abomination to him.

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD,  
but those who act faithfully are his delight (12:22)

Why does he hate a lying tongue? Because it is used to hurt and cheat and destroy.

A lying tongue hates its victims,  
and a flattering mouth works ruin (26:28)

Jesus said of the devil, “he has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (Jn. 8:44).

The Lord will punish liars. In Psalm 5:6, David says,

You destroy those who speak lies;  
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

In Revelation we read,

Outside [the holy city, the New Jerusalem] are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood (Rev. 22:15)

(3) God Hates Hands that Shed Innocent Blood

We know that not all shedding of blood is sinful, which is to say that not all killing is sinful. Killing in self-defense is justified (Ex. 22:2-3), as is killing in a just war (David was a man of war *and* a man after God's own heart); even killing as an executioner is justified (Rom. 13:1-4). The killing which God condemns is the shedding of *innocent* blood, killing those who do not deserve to die.

Cain shed the innocent blood of his own brother (Gen. 4).

It is said of King Manasseh that he shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (2 Ki. 21:16).

We have to mention here the practice of abortion. We bring this up so often because this is *the* moral crisis of our time. There is no more fundamental, God-given right, than the right to life. It is a right that no one but God can authorize to take away. But fifty million or so abortions have been committed in the U.S. since 1973. Fifty *million*. The voice of Abel's blood cried out to God from the ground. And if the blood of one righteous man cried out to God for vengeance, what shall we say about the blood of fifty million innocents?

Conclusion...