

When the Lord Commends Hatred

by F.C. Jennings

The Lord commends hatred for the Nicolaitans, who are a form of clericalism that assumes a position of superiority over the laity, and encourages believers to love Christ by hating what dishonors or wounds Him or His people.

Scripture: Matthew 7:15, 1 Corinthians 16:16, 2 Corinthians 11:13, 1 John 4:1, Revelation 2:6

Topics: "Discerning False Teachers", "Standing Against Clericalism"

Description

F.C. Jennings delves into the significance of hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, emphasizing the importance of discerning false apostles and evil influences that infiltrate the church. Drawing parallels to the biblical account of Samson's hatred for the Philistines, he highlights the need for believers to stand firm against those who seek to exalt themselves over the laity, promoting clericalism over true service and love. Jennings urges the congregation to embrace a genuine love for Christ that includes hating anything that dishonors Him or harms His people, even in the face of accusations of narrow-mindedness or bigotry.

Transcript

But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. Rev. 2:6

Here I believe we have a still more specific intimation as to the evil ones, and those false apostles that the Ephesians had tried and exposed. "Those that are evil," and "those that say they are apostles and are not," and "the Nicolaitan," are all intimately related, if indeed they are not all identical, as I believe we shall see them to be.

We have thought that the life of that poor failure Samson was, in its broad outlines, a perfect type of the path of the church as here told out prophetically. He, too, had one good thing; he certainly did hate those armies of his people, the Philistines. And here, if I err not, in these "evil ones," the "false apostles," and "Nicolaitans," are the Philistines again in the domain that belongs solely to faith. People who know none of the humbling lessons and experiences of the Cross: that know nothing of the true entrance into that domain through Jordan's swelling flood. Yet did those Philistines eventually give their names to the land, "Palestine," as these, shortly after this, claim to be "the church."

But in the day of the Ephesians they were firmly and sternly met--their deeds hated. Oh, then, is it not of the highest importance that we should know beyond doubt or question, by the light that God's word itself gives, who are these Nicolaitans? Our faith must stand firmly fixed, not in the wisdom of men, but in the

power of God.

It is one of the most remarkable phenomena of Biblical interpretation that this word Nicolaitan could have had the meaning that has been put upon it throughout the church's history. And yet it will not appear so strange when we recognize the craft of the enemy; for he naturally desires to hide the truth contained in the word, for Nicolaitanism is and has been one of his most effective weapons. If the Lord hates it, the devil loves it. Naturally, too, we may say that the false hierarchy of clericalism would not desire to condemn itself, so it was imperatively necessary to find some far-fetched explanation; and Rome calmly assured Christendom that there was in it no reference to herself or her clerical system, but that the Nicolaitans were an obscure sect founded by the deacon, Nicholas (Acts 6). Poor Deacon Nicholas! Well, it is rather a comfort to be told by those competent to tell us, that there is not the slightest trace in history of any such sect...How often we look afar off for a solution of a Scripture difficulty when it is at our elbow. We fail to see it because of its very nearness and simplicity. Those who could translate the very word Nicolaitan as easily as they could every other word would have no difficulty at all.

Nor is it a new thought that the word itself gives us simply its own interpretation, as is so frequently the case in Scripture. There have always been those who so regarded it. Nikao means to get the upper hand, and Laos is, as we all know the "laity" or the "people," so that the whole word Nicolaitan would mean in English, "those who get the ascendancy over the people or laity," i.e., "clergy" as opposed to "laity," and the deeds of such the Lord Jesus Himself has ever hated and will ever hate....Let me guard this carefully. We must not for a moment think that "ministers," or ministry, are intended here by the Nicolaitans. Nothing--and I could prove it by a large portion of Scripture, not one thing--is so dear to the Lord Jesus as the ministry of love to His own people, and never can we too highly esteem, or too carefully submit ourselves to such ministry (1 Cor. 16:16). No, no, it is not "Ministry," but "Clerisy." Not the love that would give itself up to service of the saints, and beat their feet; but the self-love that would assume a position of superiority over them. The one word speaks of service, the other of lordship.

There is another point of great practical importance in the Lord commending Ephesus for hatred. We live in a day of spurious charity (written in 1909!). If we hate anything, it is "uncharitable," and we are pressed to cover with this cloak of "charity" every wicked deed and doctrine if it comes in a specious religious garb. Love for Christ will hate without trimming or dilution, mitigation, what dishonors or wounds Him either in His own person or in His beloved people....Shall we love, or at least show a negative, neutral attitude, to anything that raises itself against Him and works for the destruction of His people? Will He commend such a course? ...Oh, let us not fear the false charges of "narrowness" and "bigotry" as long as our hearts are broad enough to take in all that is of God, let them be narrow enough to exclude and hate all that He hates.

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