

## Love The Sinner

Ponder: The temptation to hate the sinner as well as the sin

Scripture: “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why, then, is there no recovery for the health of the daughter of my people?” (Jeremiah 8:22, NKJV)

What is your reaction when you see pictures of lawmakers smiling and clapping because they have enacted a law authorizing the killing of babies in the womb right up to the moment of birth? Or you read about yet another mass shooting? Or you hear about jihadists wreaking havoc on the innocent?

You’ve probably heard the cliché, “Hate the sin, love the sinner.” It’s a good saying. It’s what Jesus did, and it’s what we ought to do. But it isn’t easy! I find it entirely too easy to allow my disgust and revulsion at the sin to degenerate into hatred toward the sinner. From what I see and hear, even from brothers and sisters in Christ, I’m not alone.

Jonah wrested with it, too. The Assyrians behaved detestably! Jonah wanted God to destroy their capital city, Nineveh. When He didn’t, Jonah sulked. I empathize with Jonah, but his attitude was wrong.

By contrast, Jeremiah knew all too well how sinfully his countrymen in Judah conducted themselves. He personally suffered from their abuse. He also knew the Babylonians would slaughter the majority of them, and that most of the survivors would be marched away as captives. But Jeremiah didn’t gloat. Instead, he wept! Wicked though they were, Jeremiah loved them. The prospect of what awaited them broke his heart.

Even when God sent the sinful people of Judah into captivity, His purpose wasn’t just punishment; His ultimate goal was redemption. Let us, likewise, do what we can toward the redemption of sinners. That doesn’t mean we approve of sin in any form or fashion! But neither do we stoop to hatred of sinners. Yes, they absolutely deserve destruction. So do I. So do you. God will take care of that in due time. We cannot afford the luxury of self-righteousness.

Hate the sin; love the sinner. Let that be more than just a cliché!

Song: “Rescue the Perishing”

Prayer: Loving Father, we marvel at Your love for us, sinful creatures that we are. We stand in awe of the love of Jesus as we think of Him suffering and dying for sinners. Keep us from being arrogant and self-righteous. Please help us to truly hate sin but love sinners, just as you hate our sin while loving us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.