

## God's 'Love'

Does God love everyone the same? Is it true that God loves everyone and 'has a wonderful plan for their lives' as is written in so many evangelistic 'tracts'?

Logically and emotionally we might want to believe this. It appeals to *our need* to be loved and for everyone to love everyone else. It is sentimental at best but at worst it is not at all in harmony with a full orb view of scripture. If God loves everyone the same then what do we do with scriptures that teach God 'hates' sinners and the wicked (Ps.5:5;11:5; Hos.9:15); that he loved Jacob but 'hated' Esau (Rom.9:13); and that He will Himself condemn many to torment in Hell (Matt.25:41;7:23)? Does God have the same love for those in Hell or those who He knows will end up in eternal fire?

*The modern church has increasingly filtered God's love through our own understanding of love.* Arguably this is more human than divine.

In scripture there are different Greek words for the *one* English word 'love'. 'Agape' is God's love and wilful direction towards man; 'phileo' is used for mans love, friendship or affection; and there is also 'philadelphia', a brotherly love (Rom.12:10; 1Thess.4:9; Heb.13:1; 1 Pet.1:22; 2 Pet.1:7). In John 21:15-17 where Jesus and Peter speak of 'love', both 'agape' and 'phileo' are used, yet the English has just *one* word translated 'love' for both.

There are different degrees and kinds of 'love'. But there are also different shades of God's 'agape' love...

### **General love:**

God has a general love or benevolence towards humanity as a whole: '**...He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust**', (Matt.5:45). But is this love the same as the special kind of love He has for His elect in His church? Obviously His love varies somewhat depending on the object of His love.

### **Special love:**

There is no doubt that God 'loves' His own selected people, the elect; and that this love is '*special*'. God loved Israel and showed special favour on them, *not shown on others*. '**For you are a holy people unto the lord your God, the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people unto himself, above all the people that are on the face of the earth. The Lord has not set his love upon you or choose you because you were more in number than any people, for You were the fewest of all people, but because the Lord loved you**', (Deut.7:6-8); '**Only the Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them, he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day**', (Deut.10:15). *Clearly this love was not the same love as to other nations.*

The Bible clearly teaches God '**hates all workers of iniquity**' (Ps.5:5; Hos.9:15) and He is '**angry with the wicked every day**', (Ps.7:11). God says '**Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated**', (Rom.9:13). This last verse is quoted from Malachi ch.1 which uses a classic word for hate often used in the Old Testament to show a strong hatred and detest. The Greek word used in Romans 9 for 'hate' ('*miseo*') is indeed the opposite of 'love'. Strong's Lexicon describes the meaning as '*to hate, pursue with hatred, to detest*'.

On the Day of Judgement, Christ will say to a multitude of people who were self deceived or deceived by others: '**Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire**

**prepared for the devil and his angels**', (Matt.25:41; 7:15-23). Is God showing the same 'love' here as to His elect?

There is no escaping the fact that God's love is special to His elect. The fact that He '**chose us in Him before the foundation of the world**' (Eph.1:4) should tell us that His love to a select group of people was decreed even *before they were born*! This is obviously not a universal love here and no amount of semantic gymnastics can change '**before the foundation of the world**' (Eph.1:4) and the fact that to only these people does He give '**every spiritual blessing**', (vs.3). The Bible clearly says that God has *predestined* the saved *before* the creation of the world (Eph.1:5,11; Rom.8:29,30; Acts 13:48); and that these He has already *beforehand* determined to glorify, (Rom.8:30). In contrast, the unsaved will die in their sins and be in Hell completely cut off from any possibility of being loved by God, (Matt.25:41; 7:23; 2 Thess.1:9). It is obvious in scripture that *some* (the believers), are showered with a *distinctive* love and are '**not appointed to wrath**' (1Thess.5:9) while *most* of the human race will suffer the wrath (anger) of God, (Matt.7:13).

We are not expected to understand this distinction in love. It is arguably beyond any human reasoning. Yet most modern evangelism today rejects this distinction. Evangelism today has become so man centred in attempting to fill the self needs of man that the 'God loves everyone' doctrine permeates most 'tracts' and messages. But this denies the judgement and the wrath of God upon sin and sinners! Jesus warned many to flee from the wrath to come, (Matt.3:7; Lk.3:7); that unsaved people have the wrath of God *now* abiding on them, (Jn.3:36); and are in fact '**children of wrath**', (Eph.2:3). God's wrath is His anger and it will be revealed against all unrighteousness and those that hold to it, (Rom.1:182:5,8).

Some readers are probably already uncomfortable with this presentation. But it is a response to the 'love gospels' that are being preached today which do not present sin and the consequences thereof! *The Gospel is 'good news' but only if one understands what it rescues them FROM.* When we are saved we are specifically saved *from* the consequences of sin - '*the wrath to come*', (Rom.5:9; 1Thess.1:10).

Does God love everyone the same? Is His love to the elect unfair? If so, then the following verses would need to be considered: '**Therefore has he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardens. You will say then unto me, Why does he yet find fault? For who has resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who are you that replies against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why have you made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory**', (Rom.9:18-23).

God's love in salvation is selective, at least in view of the fact that many in Hell will not have His love. Although it might contradict our human understanding, *there are distinctions in His love.* He is the Potter, we are the clay. He is omnipotent; He is sovereign. He is love.

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