

Does God Love His Enemies?

Scripture: Psalm 5:5; Psalm 7:11; Romans 9:13

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I can still remember the chair I was sitting in years ago when I read a life-changing page in John MacArthur's book *The God Who Loves*. In an economy of words, John exposed, confronted, and changed my thinking on one of the most critical areas of theology, the nature of God. My understanding of God's love—specifically His love for the non-elect—was never the same.

For months, I had been wrestling with the question of whether God's love extends beyond those He chose for salvation. "Does God love *all* humanity, even the Judas Iscariots and Adolf Hitlers of the world?" At the time, I couldn't answer that question with any degree of certainty. And although I was sitting under sound biblical teaching, I had begun entertaining the idea that God's elect have a monopoly on His love. I couldn't reconcile the idea of God loving His enemies with the following texts:

- Psalm 5:5, "You hate all workers of iniquity."
- Psalm 7:11, "God is angry with the wicked every day."
- Psalm 26:5, "I have hated the assembly of evil doers."

Beyond *those* troubling texts, I was grappling with God's explicit statements about hating Esau found in Romans 9 and Malachi 1. "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated." You have to admit, that's a hard verse to refute. God's hatred was unrelated to Esau's conduct or character. It was rooted in His eternal, sovereign purposes.

The more I pondered those verses, the more resistant I became to acknowledging God's love to all humanity. I failed to see the tragic effects such thinking had on my evangelistic fervency. I had adopted a self-righteous mindset, thinking God was absolutely repulsed by unbelievers—probably just as repulsed as I was. I became blind to all the Scriptures speaking to God's steadfast love and compassion for the lost. Somewhere along the way, my love and compassion for sinners waned.

I was convinced in my own mind. God *loves* the elect and *hates* the non-elect. End of discussion.

But then, I read the following words by John MacArthur:

Scripture clearly says that God is love. "The Lord is good to all, and His mercies are over all His works" (Psalm 145:9). Christ even commands us to love our enemies, and the reason He gives is this: "In order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew 5:45). The clear implication is that in some sense God loves His enemies. He loves both "the evil and the good," both "the righteous and the unrighteous" in precisely the same sense we are commanded to love our enemies.

In fact, the second greatest commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mark 12:31; cf. Leviticus 19:18), is a commandment for us to love *everyone*. We can be certain the scope of this commandment is universal, because Luke 10 records that a lawyer, “wishing to justify himself . . . said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (Luke 10:29)—and Jesus answered with the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The point? Even Samaritans, a semi-pagan race who had utterly corrupted Jewish worship and whom the Jews generally detested as enemies of God, were neighbors whom they were commanded to love. In other words, the command to love one’s “neighbor” applies to *everyone*. This love commanded here is clearly a universal, indiscriminate love.

Consider this: Jesus perfectly fulfilled the law in every respect (Matthew 5:17–18), including this command for universal love. His love for others was surely as far-reaching as His own application of the commandment in Luke 10. Therefore, we can be certain that He loved everyone. He *must* have loved *everyone* in order to fulfill the Law. After all, the apostle Paul wrote, “The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Galatians 5:14). He reiterates this theme in Romans 13:8: “He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.” Therefore, Jesus must have loved His “neighbor.” And since He Himself defined “neighbor” in universal terms, we know that His love while on earth was universal.

Do we imagine that Jesus as perfect man loves those whom Jesus as God does not love? Would God command us to love in a way that He does not? Would God demand that our love be more far-reaching than His own? And did Christ, having loved all humanity during His earthly sojourn, then revert after His ascension to pure hatred for the non-elect? Such would be unthinkable; “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes and forever” (Hebrews 13:8) (John MacArthur, *The God Who Loves*, 102-03).

John’s simple explanation of those Scriptures compelled me to rethink my position on God’s love. Jesus was God. Jesus loved His neighbors—even His non-elect neighbors. Jesus was a friend to sinners. *Jesus loved His enemies*—all of them. How could I have missed *that*? What caused me to overlook such clear, vital truths about the character of God? The answer is pride, that hideous sin lurking in all of us, waiting for the opportunity to express itself.

If you wrestle with some of the verses I listed, or struggle to reconcile God’s love with his wrath, I’d recommend you pick up a copy of John’s book [*The God Who Loves*](#).

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