

## Does God love everyone?

Most Christians today automatically believe this since it is commonly taught. However, we should note that throughout church history few have ever taught this. The apostles did not teach it, the orthodox fathers (such as Augustine) deny it, the Reformers never held this, Calvinistic Puritans did not teach this and neither did most UK Reformed church leaders until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The claim lies at the root of the heresies of Arminianism, Pelagianism, Amyraldism and Universalism and it is the influence of these errors on the church that has led to its wide acceptance.

That God does not love all is easily demonstrated as there are many scriptures that clearly deny it, such as:

**The LORD abhors [detests] the bloodthirsty and deceitful man. (Ps 5:6)**

**The wicked and the one who loves violence His [the Lord's] soul hates. (Ps 11:5)**

**Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated. (Rm 9:13 and Mal 1:2-3)**

There are no passages which state that God loves everyone. The suggestion that Jn 3:16 teaches this is absurd. The word 'world' cannot mean everyone here (and rarely does in John) for many reasons:

1. If 'world' means everyone here then it must also in the next verse (v17) – but this would teach universalism and deny hell, since it says that Jesus is sent to save the world.
2. If God loved all, what about those on whom God poured his wrath and judgment in the OT, such as Canaanites and Sodomites?
3. 'World' often means a comparatively few people in the NT e.g. Jn 12:19.
4. 'World' was emphasised here by Jesus to stretch Nicodemus' restricted view of the Gospel being for Jews alone; something even the apostles took time to realise (Acts 10).

The love of God begins in eternity and is only ever directed to the elect, chosen in eternity (Eph 1:4-5). When God loves he loves perfectly, fully, eternally and never stops (Eccles 3:14). He does not love some and offer them the Gospel, then stop loving them and condemn them; or love those in hell. He does not love some fully and others only partially or he could not be a perfect God.

We must never deny or diminish God's attributes by sloppy talk. God loves some (the elect) from eternity but also predestines others to wrath (Prov 16:4; Rm 9:17-23; 2 Pt 2:9). The revelation of his glory includes both the manifestation of his mercy, grace and love upon the elect, but also wrath, justice and punishment on the reprobate.

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Understanding Ministries

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