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Lord's Day Morning
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'Things God Hates' Series
#11

"God Hates Esau" Romans 9:1-29

Introduction

Today we come to the end of our series on *Things God Hates*. We might as well go out with a bang. We've dealt with quite a list of things God hates – and none of them are very controversial. They are pretty straight forward and logical kinds of things: proud eyes, lying lips, murderous hands, hearts and feet that run to evil, false witnesses, those who spread strife and disunity in the church, divorce and worldliness. No problem – all of those things are just that, things. They are sins and actions.

But there is this one other clear passage that speaks of something God hates – and it's not a thing, it's a person. The Bible says in more than one place that God hates Esau. And for some, that's a problem. We have all heard the old adage *God hates the sin but loves the sinner*. So this verse kind of blows that up. What do we do with a God who hates some people? How are we to think about this? What does it mean and what doesn't it mean?

Today we are going to see that when the Bible speaks of God hating people, it reflects the justice and judgment of God upon sinful man. In fact, we will see that God's hatred rather than contradicting His love actually flows out of His love.

[Romans 9:1-29]

The Bible teaches that before the world began God determined how He would deal with every single person. Some He determined would be the recipient of His special love – He would save them. Others, He determined He would not pour His special love upon, and they would be judged forever in hell because of their sin and rebellion. In that sense, He determined to hate them. This passage in Romans is the clearest passage in the Bible on this subject. Before we look at some of the things Paul writes about, we need to realize that this is not Romans 1. This is Romans 9. In other words, Paul didn't start His teaching to the Romans here. In fact, he's almost to the end of what He wanted to teach them.

There is a very important truth that He carefully laid out in the earlier chapters – especially chapters 3- 5 – about the nature of man. That truth is that man is in complete rebellion against God and is not deserving of God's favor and love. Chapter 3 goes to great lengths to teach that no man is good and no man does good. None are righteous. None seek God. All are swift to do the very things that we've already seen God hates.

So man is not lovable. We deserve God's judgment, wrath, hatred, and condemnation. These things should not surprise us. Usually our problem with the judgment of God is that we have too high a view of what we are really like. We wrongly think that we deserve more. And so rather than being blown away and in awe of His mercy and love, we are critical and judgmental of His wrath and judgments.

And so, in this study about God hating Esau, we really need to study the nature of God. What can we learn about God? If He really hates, what does

that tell us about Him. And so let's start by thinking about how God views the world.

First of all, let's remember that the Bible never describes God in terms of hatred. There are no verses that say *God is hate and you better watch out*. But we are told that *God is love* and because of that love He has taken away our sins. The message of the gospel is this incredible account of how we deserve to die, we deserve the worst punishment imaginable, but God's response to that sin has been love rather than wrath.

In the opening verses of Romans 9 there are these amazing words of the apostle Paul as he reflects upon the sin of the Jews. (Read 1-3) What we in fact have here is an illustration of Paul imitating Christ. He often told people to follow and imitate him just as he followed and imitated Christ. This is a prime example.

When Jesus looks at the world, He has *great sorrow and unceasing grief in his heart*. The sight of men and women who were created in the image of God with the ability to glorify and serve Christ, the sight of them instead degrading Christ and living for their own glory – that sight stirs up in God great sorrow and unceasing grief.

And Paul says, *I wish I myself were accursed for the sake of my brethren*. Well, guess what? That's exactly what Jesus did! He became cursed by God when He took upon Himself the sin of His people.

Do you see the amazing grace of the gospel here? The context is the utter rebellion of the Jews. They had every privilege and benefit imaginable from God so that they might know Him and serve Him. But they rejected Christ. And in the face of the judgment and wrath of God, which they were certainly facing, we find the language of love and

sacrifice. Does this mean that God doesn't get angry, that He doesn't bring judgment and wrath? Of course not.

If you think back upon the two greatest judgments in the Bible – the flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah – you will find these same things present. God is sorrowful – and that sorrow moved Him – not just to judgment, but to demonstrate love. *Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.* He didn't earn that grace, but God refused to destroy mankind. Lot found grace from God. He had made sinful choices, but God rescued him and literally dragged him out of Sodom. **We cannot think about the judgment, wrath and hatred of God apart from His grace and mercy.**

So then, what does it mean that *God hates Esau*?

1. Esau represents the wicked and unsaved. He represents those who die in their sin without ever repenting and trusting in Jesus Christ. *He represents those whom God does not save.*

When sin entered into the world through Adam and Eve, God promised that the consequence would be death. Sin is an affront to the holiness of God. But even as God pronounced His judgment in the Garden of Eden, He made a promise that not all would be lost. There would be a great conflict between the seed of Satan and the seed of woman. Right then and there all of humanity was divided into one of two groups. The children who would be in the line of evil and wickedness and the children of promise – those God determined to save.

Look at verses 6-8. The children of promise are those whom God has chosen to love. We call them the elect. Or as Ephesians 1 says *In love He predestined us to adoption as sons.* Jacob stands

in the line of those whom God loved and chose. But Esau, on the other hand, stands in the line of those God did not chose – those whom He hated.

2. God's hatred does not translate into meanness and wickedness.

When we think of hatred in our culture, we equate it with evil. We talk about *hate crimes, and genocide and ethnic cleansing and hate speech*. When men hate they often sin. If someone truly hates his neighbor he might slash his tires or curse him or attack him.

This is one of the reasons we have trouble thinking about God hating anyone. But the Scriptures reveal a far different picture of God. Rather than delighting in judgment, God says in Ezekiel 33:11 *"Say to them, 'As I live!' declares the Lord God, 'I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways!'"* There's the heart of God. He doesn't delight in judging the wicked.

In the first few verses of Romans 2, Paul talks about the coming judgment of God. And he begins by affirming that the *judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. (evil)*. But then he goes on to show how God deals with sinners. *Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each person according to his deeds:*

So without denying the coming judgment of God or His justice or His righteousness, we find the common grace He displays toward those headed for that judgment is filled with kindness.

I know that as reformed Christians we don't say that *God loves everyone* because in fact we understand this passage. But there is a sense in which He does love everyone – not with a special saving love, but with a practical love. Every person has been created in the image of God and is part of the crowning work of God's creation. That reality has implications. Matthew 5:43 ff says *You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'* *But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **so 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.***

So if these things are true about God, how then does He hate Esau and all those who stand in his line?

1. Remember that God's greatest desire is His own glory. His purpose in the world is to bring glory to His name.

And one of the primary ways He does that is through the work of His Son. God loves you so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross. When we receive His grace and come to believe in Christ, His glory is magnified. It only makes sense that God would hate anyone who opposes His love for His people and His glory being made manifest to them through the cross.

If God didn't hate those who oppose the gospel, what kind of love would that be toward those who believe? If your family was under attack and

you didn't hate and resist those who were breaking into your home to do harm, what kind of love would you be showing toward your family? The point is this. God's opposition and hatred toward the reprobate flows from His deep and sacrificial love for His children. If God overlooked the sin of those who are children of the flesh (which He doesn't do), He would in fact be diminishing His love for us and for His Son.

2. The Doctrine of Election Demonstrates God's Love Not His Hatred.

People don't like this thing called election or predestination. They think it makes God out to be unjust or unloving. But the opposite is true.

We don't deserve His grace and love. The fact that in His infinite wisdom He chooses to give it to some is a testimony of His merciful nature.

Thankfully:

- He doesn't use race, background, nationality or religious connections to decide who to save. The nation of Israel is a good illustration of this.
- He doesn't use merit, good works or our worthiness either. If He did, no one would be saved. The comparison between Jacob and Esau makes this clear. (Vs.11)
For though the twins were not yet born and had not done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to His choice would stand, not because of works but because of Him who calls,

God simply has mercy on whom He has mercy and compassion upon whom He has compassion. It depends solely and completely on Him. He raises some up for destruction and some for life. And He asks us to trust His wisdom, His sovereignty, and

His purposes. He does give us this much. Verse 23. He does these things to *make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory*. The work of salvation with its many parts brings glory to Him.

And what is most important for us is the application which he gives in the next chapter. We can't see into the hidden counsel of God. We can't look at the list of who's elect and who's not. But we can know and believe this promise with all of hearts. *Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved*. That promise is absolutely and completely true. There are no loopholes. It is not a half promise.

So the question we need to ask at the end of the day flows from this truth: While God does the electing and the saving, we need to ask, *have I called on the name of Christ? Is my hope and my confidence in His work on the cross?*