

DOES GOD LOVE *EVERYONE*?

by
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Preface

This study arose from questions asked by church leaders and young Bible students. There seems to be no available booklet or paper on this subject anywhere. Why is that I wonder? Is not this a crucial subject? The heart of the issue is our understanding of the character of God. This is the foundation of our theology and our walk in the Spirit. We must be true and Biblical in our conception of God or everything will go wrong. If God loves everyone, then he cannot hate anyone (including Satan, whom sinners are said to follow, Eph. 2:2, or be children of Jn. 8:44). This is patently unbiblical as God is said to hate some people. If God loves everyone, why should a sinner bother to get saved at all? God will not act outside his character, so a loving God cannot send people to hell. This concept is obviously preposterous and untrue. It was Jesus, the fullest representation of God's love, who spoke more about hell and judgment than anyone else.

What concerns me most is that, after reading the first draft of this paper, several leaders commented that, though they could not disprove any of the arguments, they would refuse to accept the conclusion! They could offer no Biblical proof for their position, but were determined to continue to teach something that was evidently unscriptural and false. The grip of this idea - that God loves all people, at all times, in all places, without exception - forces people to act in an unbiblical fashion.

Furthermore, many Christian agencies are becoming almost frantic over the consistent failure of evangelistic efforts (excepting perhaps, the Alpha course for which more assessment is needed to judge its fruit). The Evangelical Alliance's magazine, IDEA, announced in a main article title that 'Evangelism Isn't Working' (IDEA Jan-March 1996). More and more churches are adopting experience or performance based meetings and dropping proclamation in the hope that people will listen, it seems that they are not.

Is it not time to re-examine the popular message that most Christians utilise in witnessing to see if it is correct? The God Loves You approach is not only unbiblical,

it is a fairly recent invention that was not the message of the early church and is not working.

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(NOTE: All ref. footnotes in brackets ref. to Bibliographies p.14.)

WHY STUDY THIS?

We need to look at this question in view of the apparent contradiction between common evangelistic witnessing methods and Biblical statements. Nowhere in the Old or New Testament do we find the phrase: 'God loves all men' (i.e. mankind). Yet on every hand we see Christians confidently telling enquirers that 'God loves you', or worse: 'God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life'. This might seem like nit picking were it not for the fact that in a number of places in the Bible we are told that God hates sinners. God hates workers of iniquity, man is hostile to God, there is enmity between man and God, God's wrath is abiding upon those who do not believe etc.

It is obvious that we need to be careful here to avoid misrepresenting God or even blaspheming. If God hates sinners, who dares to tell an individual that God loves him specifically. On the other hand, we are certain that God loves a fallen creation so much that he sent his son to die to provide a redemption for man and nature.

NEW METHODS?

It is concerning that, in this century, we are seeing a presentation of the Gospel that is significantly different from the historical method. It is common for people to be assured of their salvation simply because they raised their hand at a gospel service, or came to the front in a high powered evangelistic campaign or prayed a written prayer without any previous heart preparation, or prayed a prayer dictated by someone else. Where is repentance in all this? Repentance, as a result of deep conviction of sin prompted by the Holy Spirit, is a condition for salvation, yet it is noticeably missing.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that official figures of certain campaigns show an 80% fall away rate for professed conversions. Nor should we be shocked at the general dearth of deep spiritual life, coupled with the desire for emotional experiences in many churches. The increasing level, and growing serious nature of counselling requirements in English churches, seems also to follow in the wake of inadequate counselling for salvation. Many counselling sessions for long term problems

