

A Reformed View Of God's Love

With proof texts

John Knox wrote: "You make the love of God common to all men, and that we constantly do deny." Why did he write that? He wrote it because he knew that...

Love is one of God's attributes, along with holiness and righteousness.

Love is an attribute of God (1 John 4:8,16; Romans 5:8).

Holiness and righteousness are equally attributes of God (Joshua 24:19; Psalm 99:5; Revelation 4:8; Psalm 145:7; Acts 17:31).

God can not love sinners without justice being fully satisfied (Exodus 34:7). God does love some sinners because Divine justice and mercy meet in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on their behalf (Psalm 85:10; Romans 5:8).
God does not need to love any sinner.

There is nothing about us sinners that moves God to love any one of us (Psalm 14:1-3; 144:3; Genesis 6:5; Romans 3:10-19).

God's own good pleasure is what moves Him to have mercy and show love to any particular sinner (Ephesians 1:5,9,11; Romans 9: 15,16; Exodus 33:19; Deuteronomy 7:7-9).
Election is the fountain of God's love for sinners.

Before the foundation of the world, God has set His love upon some sinners in unconditional election (Jeremiah 31:3; 2 Timothy 1:9; Ephesians 1:4). Electing love gives the elect to Christ, and Christ to the elect, as the gift of love to save the elect (John 17:6, 11; Ephesians 1:4).

At the same time God, to show the glory of His justice, leaves others in their sins as objects of His righteous hatred (Matthew 11:25-26; Romans 9:13, 15, 18, 21-23).
God's love always saves

Because the elect world is loved in Christ (Ephesians 1:3ff).

Because Christ was given to die on the cross to save the world of elect sinners (John 10:11, 26-29; John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 2 Timothy 1:9, Galatians 2:20).

Because God's love, flowing from election, produces effectual call-ing, justification and glorification (Romans 8:28-31; Jeremiah 31:3; 1 Peter 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:9).
God loves the elect - God hates the reprobate.

God loves the elect eternally, unchangeably, and savingly (Jeremiah 31:3, Malachi 3:6). God justly hates the reprobate (Romans 9:13,18, 22; 2 Peter 2:8).

The hatred of God is sovereign and righteous. Sovereign in that God passes by for no other reason than his own good pleasure. Righteous because God hates them as guilty sinners and purposes that, in the way of their own sins, they should be condemned and damned.
It is NOT true that God loves all sinners, but hates their sin.

Sin can not be separated from the sinner, because it is the nature of man that is sinful (Psalm 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 12:34-35; Luke 6: 44-45).

The Bible speaks of God being angry with, and hating the wicked, that is people who do wickedness (Psalm 5:4-6; 11:5-6; Proverbs 16:4).

The proposition is true only of God's elect for God loves them in Christ (Romans 5:8-10; Ephesians 2:1-10). God loves them because He pre-destinated them unto the adoption of children in Jesus Christ, and He has satisfied His justice against them and their sin when Jesus died in their stead on the cross of Calvary. And, God loves them in such a way that they ALL are all united to His Son for justification, sanctification and glorification - being brought to live unto God, confessing always: "The life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me" (Ephesians 1:4-5, Galatians 2:20).

God is not actively loving non-elect men when he gives them good things in this life, like money, health etc, or even when He sends them the gospel to hear.

Prosperity is no sign that God's loves this or that particular sinner (Psalm 73:18-19; Luke 12:20, 21).

Hearing the gospel preached is no sure sign that God loves this or that particular sinner (Matthew 13:10-15, 22:14; 1 Peter 2:8; 2 Corinthians 2:14ff).

A sinner may be assured that God loves him/her only when there is evidence of that love having produced saving faith in their life. In other words, God's electing, redeeming love, is manifest in their lives through true faith and repentance (1John 4: 19).

Conclusion:

The Biblical and Reformed faith teaches that God's love flows to His elect, and His elect alone, in and through Jesus Christ.

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