

Jacob I Loved; Esau I Hated

An anxious man asked me, “How can I trust a God who may have chosen to hate me before I was born, in the same way He hated Esau (Romans 9:13)?”

Well might we tremble before the Sovereign God who does whatever He wants with us His creatures. “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’” (Daniel 4:35).

Can any person on earth or in hell complain against God and say, “Why did You choose to hate me?” If I lived a perfect moral and spiritual life without a single fault, always loving God with all my heart and always loving my neighbour as myself, then perhaps I might dare open my mouth before Him. But I have not lived such a life. My sin – the breaking of God’s Law – is an affront to the Lordship of our Creator, and a rebellion against the Ruler of the universe. With every sin, I challenge the Almighty, “God, I defy Your authority, I despise Your rule, I hate You!”

How then can I, a miserable sinner, question God’s justice and ask whether He has the right to hate me? Obviously He has every reason to be angry with me, and with every sinner, and cast us all rebels into the fire of hell forever. We deserve His wrath; God is perfectly just to condemn sinners.

The great wonder is how God could choose to love some of these rebellious creatures, forgive and welcome them to heaven. It is no surprise that God hated Esau; the great difficulty to understand is how He could love Jacob - for Jacob was a sinner too!

The answer is hid in God. He does according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth. “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion” (Romans 9:15).

The answer is manifest in His Son Jesus Christ who took upon His shoulders the sin of God's beloved people and suffered the divine wrath instead of them. “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

God is free to love whoever He wants; God is just to love sinners because He redeemed them with His own blood.

Back to the original question: “How can I trust a God who may have chosen to hate me?” You should trust God because He who has every right to hate you, earnestly promises sinners: "Let the wicked forsake his way, the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7).

Would you turn to God? “Lord I am guilty sinner! I deserve your hatred and your anger. You are just if You abhor and punish me in hell. I have no excuse; I have no defense before Your throne. Have mercy on me; save me for Christ's sake. Love me that I may love and praise you forever for your mercy, goodness and grace!”