

Is the Love of God Unconditional?

Fred R. Coulter—December 28, 1996

Well, I'm up to my old tricks again—I'm reading a book—and this book is called *Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God* by Michael Feazell: '*The remarkable story of a cult's journey from deception to truth.*' it's really quite the other way around—from Truth to deception. I'm going to cover a couple of things here, because I want to ask: Is God's love always unconditional? Having unconditional love means—in *their* view of thinking, especially with the Protestants—that as long as you're *feeling good* about God and *feel good* about what you are doing, then you are loving God. And what you're doing is right and God does not judge you. However, we're going to see there's quite a bit to *love*—God's love, our love:

- has to do with *the heart*
- has to do with *faith*
- has to do with *obedience*
- there's also the love of the 'prodigal son'

—and there's another ingredient that is missing in *all* of what is said here, because people can be very well intentioned and do things and really *feel good* about them.

You can go, almost anywhere—a high school football game, basketball game—and everybody's there to have a good time, and everybody *feels good*—especially if your team wins. The cheerleaders are out there and they *feel good* about their cheers; they've practiced them, everyone is really ready for this. The crowd is there to chant to make them *feel really good* about this and how wonderful it is, and so forth.

So, to *feel good* about something emotionally does not mean that it's good with God, because the Bible says there is 'pleasure in sin for a season.' Using that kind of reasoning, you can conclude almost anything. As long as your intention is right—you say to yourself, 'God knows my heart and therefore, since God knows my heart, since I *feel good* about this, He must accept it.'

This is where Feazell is coming from; he was the assistant to Joseph Tkach Sr. and Jr. In reading the book, I would have to say that there is an awful lot in here that is just muddle-headed thinking. I might say, too, the cover of the book—where they have the picture of Herbert Armstrong in the upper left and then it looks like the picture is torn—on the original version they had flames of fire on the tear, as if Herbert were going to eternal hell. The Canadian government refused to allow that into Canada because that was against their religious harmony law, so Zondervan, the publishers, changed

it. I'm going to read on page 18 from the Prolog. He's talking about the grass there in Pasadena on the campus—remember? They had the dychondra, it says, "please don't walk on it." And he got upset about that. He says:

Immediately I saw the reason for this rule of not walking on it and made it my lifelong policy never to walk on Ambassador's magnificent carpets of green. At the same time, though, I felt it was a colossal shame that what seemed to me to be the most fantastic lawns in the world could only be looked at and not walked on.

Go to Germany, my friend. You walk on the grass, any grass, and you've had it! There are lawns that kids can walk on; nothing wrong with that. Now, notice his conclusion:

That is what legalism does to people. It can create the illusion of something wonderful, but something that can never be what it was meant to be is not. In the end, wonderful. Maybe it is better than nothing, but it is still at best, only a hollow shell. Until the liberating war of Asian shadows it into it's worthless dust it is... [oh, that is an awkward sentence] ...legalism ironically imprisons it fixed and was confounding dungeon of smug anxiety and self-satisfied frustration.

He has a point concerning legalism; and the Worldwide Church of God was very legalistic, because they did not teach the members to look to Christ. You don't solve the problem by throwing away the Truth of God in that. What you do is you teach people to follow Christ. You point them to the love of God. Somehow, *he concludes* that

- you can't keep the Sabbath and have the love of God
- you can't keep the Feast of God and have the love of God
- you can't keep the laws of clean and unclean meats and have the love of God
- you can't give tithes—*especially tithes*—and have the love of God.

That's the reasoning that this comes to.

I want to cover today: *is God's love unconditional?* That He is bound under all circumstances—because we *feel good* about it—that He is obligated to acknowledge what we are doing is acceptable in His sight.

Within weeks... [after the death of Herbert W Armstrong] ...the first challenge was raised to Armstrong's presumed absolute insight on the Scriptures. Mark Kaplan, Ambassador College's professor of Hebrew raised a question about Armstrong's dogmatic teaching that the children of Israel did not depart from Egypt on the same night as they ate the Passover meal, but on the next night.

I distributed Kaplan's paper to the members of the Council of Elders and the consensus was that Kaplan was right. The preponderance of Scriptural evidence lay in favor of the millennial or Jewish viewpoint.... [What a surprise!] ...The cork was in the dam... [the cork was in the dam now to start taking away all doctrines of the Church] ...Armstrong was wrong about a point that he taught with particular force and dogmatism, Tkach decided that the best course of action was to delete the offending section from the Church booklet about the annual Holy Days and officially inform the pastors that the issue was more historical not doctrinal and therefore of no consequence.

Now you know why we have *The Christian Passover* book—which goes into every detail of it. I never knew until I got this book that that was one of the first things that they did.

Mark Kaplan was one of the insiders—you know, the sleepers—to come in and do this very thing, to help bring down the Worldwide Church of God. I need to mention one other thing that he doesn't mention. He has some charts in the back showing the changes and so forth and how they lost membership because of the changes. He is dishonest in his conclusion because he did not say that these people—for the sake of keeping the Sabbath, for the sake of keeping the Holy Days—left the Worldwide Church of God and are currently in other Churches of God.

Before we go any further, let's go to Rev. 14, and let's see something that is very important concerning commandment-keeping. This is what we need to realize, brethren. This is everyone, whether it's Protestants, Catholics, Buddhist, Hindus or whoever—we've got to include all the religions of the world in this now, since we live in a diverse society. We're going to learn a principle here:

Revelation 14:12: "Here is *the* patience of the saints... [or the endurance; the saints are to endure] ...here *are* the ones who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."

Let's understand a principle here that is very profound and important, which is this: ***In order to keep the commandments of God, the way God wants them kept, it must be by faith.*** All the commandments of God are by faith because you believe God. This thing that faith comes without keeping the commandments of God, because you feel good, ***is wrong!*** Back to the book:

Small and merely historical as this particular point may have been, later changes would raise the larger question: how could Tkach have the authority to changed Armstrong's teaching and then the conundrum? If Armstrong was wrong about that, then he could have been wrong about appointing Tkach. And worse, but still unthinkable at this early stage, if Armstrong really was wrong about something he felt God had revealed to him, how could he have called himself God's only true apostle.

In that there are some questions of truth and questions of error. It is true, he shouldn't have called himself God's only apostle, no question about that. Here's another sleeper:

K.J. Stavrinides, an Ambassador College faculty member was a friend and frequent research resource for Tkach. Stavrinides explained to Tkach that Armstrong's idea of the sacrifice of Christ being segmented into blood for spiritual sin and broken body for the physical sin was erroneous. Instead, Jesus' sacrifice was one unified whole for the whole redemption of humanity.

The Bible does say that you 'wash your robes in the blood of the Lamb'—correct? It does say that you are 'healed by His stripes'—correct? Those are two parts of a whole unified sacrifice of Christ for the redemption of those that God calls now—and, for those God calls later when He executes His Plan.

Let me read another section here—concerning Christmas. Why it's okay to keep Christmas. He let his children watch Mr. Rogers. Mr. Rogers would come every morning and teach the kids the ABCs and all their little sing-songy little things. It came Christmas time, so Mr. Rogers dresses up as Santa Claus. And they looked at their father and said, 'Is Mr. Rogers bad?' What he kept telling them all along is Mr. Rogers is good. And how can he now say that Mr. Rogers was bad? Should he tell them that he was doing something that was bad, that he is basically a good person? He didn't know how to handle it, so he uses this device as a way for keeping Christmas. Now, we come to the final rational:

Christians who condemn Christmas have their reasons. Prior to the fourth century, December 25th was indeed a day of pagan merry-making in the Roman Empire in honor of the birthday of the invincible son.

Who was Baal? *The sun- god!* Go back and read the Old Testament on how many times God condemned the Israelites for following the days of Baal.

It marked the lengthening of day following the Roman solstice—the dying sun indicated by the shorter days of winter was reborn at this time and it began to increase again—it's strength is shown by the longer days. How can a day devoted to pagan rubbery be used to honor Christ?

So, here's his answer:

To the contrary, of avoiding it, perhaps December 25th was ultimately settled on by Christians, laid by the decree of the pope, for celebrating the birth of Christ precisely so that the Christian observance would coincide with the pagan festival. So as to over-shadow and replace it, which of course it did, Jesus Christ is worshiped as the true light of the world and as the true Son of righteousness who rises with healing in His wings.

So conscience and condemnation:

The Christmas tree is highly offensive to some Christians who consider it a leftover of pagan rubbery and nature worship. It is interesting however, to know that Yahweh is not reluctant to compare Himself to a pine tree (Hosea 14:8).

Hosea will show you the kind of reasoning that is used. Let's come Hosea 14:1, so we'll get the whole flow here, so we'll understand what's going on. "O Israel, return to the LORD your God..."—because he corrected them and sent them into exile for transgressing and sinning—correct?

"...for you have fallen because of your iniquity. Take with you words, and return to the LORD. Say to Him, 'Take away all *our* iniquity, and receive *us* graciously, that we may repay *with* the sacrifices of our lips. Assyria shall not save us... [they came to realize] ...we will not ride on horses. Nor shall we say any more to the work of our hands, 'Our gods'—for in You the fatherless finds mercy.'.... [God's words]: ...'I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely; for My anger has turned away from him'" (vs 1-4).

We show that some of the conditions of the love of God has also to do with **correcting**, because

Heb. 12 says 'for whom God loves He chastens'—right? *Yes!* That still is an expression of God's love. To love one **freely** means they have repented of their sins, that they're in good standing with God, and you can't be in good standing with God until you repent of your sins and return unto the Lord—correct?

Verse 5: "'I will be as the dew to Israel ... [Do we worship 'dew'? Do we celebrate the feast of 'dew'? I say that with a little cynicism and sarcasm, rightly so as you will see] ...he shall blossom as the lily and cast out his roots like Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. Those who dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive like the grain, and grow like the vine. Their scent *shall be* as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim *shall say*, 'What have I to do any more with idols?' I have heard *him* and watched him; I *am* like a leafy cypress tree. Your fruit is found from Me'" (vs 5-8). So therefore, since God says, "...I *am* like a leafy cypress tree..." **it is all right to have the Christmas tree**. In all my years in the Church that's the first time I have ever heard that justification.

Feazell quotes from the *New International Version*—here's verse 8 in his book quoted from the *NIV*:

"O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols? I will answer him and care for him. I am like a green pine tree; and your fruitfulness comes from me."

What is the difference between this and the Christmas tree? *He's picturing this as a living tree; it's not cut!* Remember Jer. 10 'One goes in the forest and cuts a tree. Nails it with hammers and nails, decks it with silver and gold,' and so forth.

To be like a green pine tree or fir tree is a *simile!* Meaning that from that you are going to draw the aspects of life, of health, of protection by the shadow of God, as by the tree. God pictures Himself as everything. So He says, 'I'm like the dew.'

Do we take this green pine tree and get the squirter and if you want to take it literally, and this gives you cause for having a Christmas tree in your house, then you must get a squirt bottle and every day put some mist on it. I'm being facetious, of course. Now then, here's his conclusion:

Thus, in direct contrast to idols, God compares Himself to a green pine tree as a symbol.

No, He said it was *as a likeness*, not a *symbol*. A *symbol* can be turned to worship.

That He is the only Source of the fruitfulness of His people. I know of no

Christians who worship the Christmas tree. Perhaps there are some but I've never heard of them. While I can respect and understand the viewpoint and decision of Christians who avoid Christmas, I have come to view it in a fresh way, a way that provides another excellent opportunity to focus and orient my life around the saving and empowering work of God through Jesus Christ.

Then, he wrote a *long* poem, here's the conclusion of it here:

That's what Christmas is all about, the love of God. That's the story the Christmas tree tells us on this Christmas season. There is no sin in approaching these matters differently. The Bible is silent about the celebration of Christmas. There was no sin in the Worldwide Church of God avoiding Christmas for reasons of conscience. The sin lay in the unrelenting condemnation of all Christians who view the matter differently from the way we did.

See what he's doing? He's taking all the teachings from the Bible and saying these are human expressions of interpretation from the Scripture, therefore we can re-interpret it a different way.

They are symbols of a new life we have in Jesus. It is another way of drawing... [if you don't keep Christmas] ...a boundary around the grace of God. It is another way of declaring God's grace reaches to us and no further—how is that so? The grace of God does not have boundaries.... [Does it or doesn't it? What is a boundary on the grace of God?] ...And also with this, the love of God has no boundaries.

What are some of the boundaries on the grace of God? *Okay, there must be repentance, true!* What's another boundary on it?

Romans 6:1: "What then shall we say? Shall we continue in sin, so that grace may abound? **MAY IT NEVER BE!...**" (vs 1-2). Is that not a limit to the grace? *Yes it is!* That is a distinct boundary—is it not? You can't live in sin and claim the grace of God—correct? So therefore, you're obligated to find out what is sin. From the Word of God, not your own ideas or how you feel.

Verse 2: "MAY IT NEVER BE! We who died to sin, how shall we live any longer therein?"

Romans 3:7: "For if, by my falsehood, the truth of God has shown itself *to be* supremely great, to His glory, why am I still being judged as a sinner?"

But not, according as we are being blasphemously charged, and according as some are affirming *that* we say, 'Let us practice evil things in order that good things may come.' Their condemnation is deserved" (vs 7-8).

That's what he's saying here, but he says it nicely. So therefore, if you say 'evil' nicely and you look at it with a warm, fuzzy feeling in your heart and you claim you love God, now therefore, it's got to be right because you feel good.

Verse 31: "Are we, then, abolishing law through faith? **MAY IT NEVER BE!** Rather, we are establishing law." That it may be *written in our hearts and within our minds*—correct? *Yes!*

Let's look at one other thing that limits grace, if there were no boundary at all to the grace of God—in other words, the grace of God is boundless. In other words, there are no boundaries, meaning there are no parameters, there are no definitions, but however you want to claim it: 'Lord just as I am,' implies no repentance.

Jude 3: "Beloved, when personally exerting all *my* diligence to write to you concerning the common salvation, I was compelled... [obligated] ...to write to you, exhorting *you* to fervently fight for the faith, which once for all *time* has been delivered to the saints." Which we have seen must also include commandment-keeping.

- It takes faith to keep the Sabbath
- It takes faith to keep the Holy Days
- It takes faith to do the things that God says
- It takes *no* faith to have an idol
- It takes *no* faith to worship other gods
- It takes *no* faith to keep Sunday
- It takes *no* faith to commit adultery, murder or whatever justification you want

Verse 4: "For certain men have stealthily crept in... [stealthily, just like Kaplan] ...those who long ago have been written about, condemning *them* to this judgment. *They are* ungodly men, who are perverting the grace of our God, *turning it* into licentiousness, and are personally... [When you do that, what happens?]: ...denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ." So, there are boundaries to it—right? *Yes, indeed!*

Our petty ideas about pagan origins and outward appearances evaporate under the intense heat of God's love. God is not interested in our self-aggrandizing quarrels about theological details, He is interested in us.

Then he quotes John 3:16. So, he puts it in the realm of rather than the Truth of God it's theological arguments.

Our theological disputes seem bent on separating us from each other.

Did not God call us to be separate? Are we of the world? *or* Not of the world?

This is New Testament doctrine by Paul—is it not? 2-Corinthians 6:14: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and lawlessness *have* in common? What fellowship *does* light *have* with darkness? And what union...” (vs 14-15)—*or agreement*. Isn’t it interesting that the agreements between the governments of this world and the Vatican are called *concordance*.

Verse 15: “And what union *does* Christ *have* with Belial? Or what part *does* a believer *have* with an unbeliever? And what agreement *is there between* a temple of God and idols? For you are a temple of *the* living God, exactly as God said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. Therefore, **come out from the midst of them and be separate,**’ says *the Lord*, and touch not *the* unclean, and I will receive you; And I shall be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,” says *the Lord Almighty*” (vs 14-18).

So therefore, what we have is 2-Corinthians 7:1: “Now then, beloved, since we have these promises, we should purge ourselves from every defilement of *the* flesh and *the* spirit, perfecting holiness in *the* fear of God.” So, yes it does have a limit.

Is the analogy important? Yes, it’s even critical, when it is about what God is and what He has done to save the world. That is just the point: Jesus came to save sinners of whom I am the chief. I don’t need hair-splitting definitions of sin, I need Jesus Christ, my Savior, Lord and Teacher.... [Yes he does! We all need Christ] ...Praise God for Fred Rogers and Santa Claus. Praise God for the Easter Bunny and chocolate eggs. Today in the town of Bethlehem and build it up, a Savior has been born unto you, He is Christ the Lord. I celebrate on Christmas and Easter because, by the grace of God, and only by the grace of God, I love Jesus.

If you love Jesus, do you believe what He says? Here’s a statement by Jesus, we’ve gone over this many, many, many times, but we’ll do it again. And of course, remember what I’ve said about writing books on history. Who writes the history? *The victor!* This will be the interpretation to the world of what happened to the Worldwide Church of God—the true story will never be published.

Because when you have certain men who stealthily creep in unaware and a conspiratorial overthrow they do not leave footprints, they only leave the fruits of destruction. That’s why when you say of a conspiracy that you must have proof that will stand up in court—that is a long standard. Jesus said ‘you’ll know them by their fruits.’ If you see these things going on and you listen to their words and hear what they say, then compare it with the Scriptures. Then you’re comparing it with the standard of God and you’re not comparing it with your own ideas and your own self in your own way.

Here is what Jesus said, John 14:15: “If you love Me, keep the commandments—namely, My commandments.” He did not say, ‘If you feel good about something I know you love Me.’ No, He said, “If you love Me, keep the commandments...” We’ll come back here and look at some other things.

Like any other verse in the Bible this one needs to be understood in the whole context of the plan of God and what God is doing, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.”

That is a very broad verse—isn’t it? What has to happen in belief, for the ‘whosoever’ [everyone]? *They have to repent! Yes!* What is there to believe in if you don’t repent? Is it to believe because “...God so loved the world...” that if you *feel good* about things and *you say* that you love God that you can do anything you want—as long as you *feel good!* ***That’s not true!***

Let’s understand something about God’s love in relationship to God’s responsibility and God’s power and God’s understanding. In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth—correct? *Yes! He reformed the surface of the earth in six days!* What did He do on these days, when He brought forth the animals and so forth? *He blessed them said, ‘be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth’—correct?* What did he say to man? *He said that He made them male and female, and blessed them and said, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and I’ve given you dominion of the whole earth.’*

That’s an expression of ***God’s love to all people***. But that expression of God’s love to all people *does not mean salvation to all people*. What happened to Adam and Eve when they sinned? Was the blessing changed to a curse? *Yes!* Is that a limiting of God’s love? *Yes!* A curse from God for correction is also an expression of God’s love, which limits the blessings that He would give for obedience, He limits the blessings that He gives to those for disobedience, or, in fact, brings a curse.

Remember what happened to Cain? Remember what happened at the Flood of Noah? God was very particular with Noah—wasn't He? The whole earth had corrupted His way and was only evil in the thoughts of man, were only evil from his youth up, so therefore, God said, 'I will destroy man and beasts from the face of the earth, for it grieved Me that I have made man. But Noah found grace!' Was God's grace boundless or limited? *It was limited to Noah, and his family!* God's grace does not go out to the whole world as a *boundless* thing in which then you can do anything you want to.

Now let's see where God has bound Himself with something which He will not violate. So therefore, because these things are and these things happen and these things continue this way, does not mean that God's love is boundless to the whole world and equals salvation. God gave a promise as an expression of His love and faithfulness to mankind this way.

Genesis 9:1: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and He said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth.'"

Verse 7: "And you, be fruitful and multiply. Bring forth abundantly in the earth, and increase in it." Has mankind done that? Does that blessing still apply to all of mankind regardless of where they are? To all nations and tribes, etc.? *Yes!*

Verse 8: "And God spoke to Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, 'Behold I, even I establish My covenant with you, and with your seed after you'" (vs 8-9)—which means all nations. Here is a covenant with all nations, which is an expression of God's love.

Verse 10: "And with every living creature that *is* with you—of the birds, of the livestock, and of every animal of the earth with you—from all that go out from the ark, to every animal of the earth. And I will establish My covenant with you. Neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood. Neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth" (vs 8-11).

Did God keep His promise? *Yes!* There have been major floods in different parts of the world but it didn't cover the whole earth or destroy it. Which then is also another proof that the whole earth was covered with water.

Verse 12: "And God said, 'This *is* the sign of the covenant which I make between Me and you and every living creature with you, for everlasting generations... [it is a covenant for 'perpetual generations.'] ...I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be *the* sign of *the* covenant between Me and

the earth. And it shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember My covenant, which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the rainbow shall be in the cloud. And I will look upon it that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.' And God said to Noah, 'This *is* the token of the covenant which I have established between Me and all flesh that *is* upon the earth.'" (vs 12-17). There we have it.

- Has God kept His word? *Yes!*
- Is this an expression of God's love to the whole earth? *Yes!*
- Does this give salvation to the whole earth? *No!*

Because the rest of the story is, and we've covered it, what happened? *God called Abraham, and Abraham alone*—correct? One man! Is that restricting His love to other nations? *Sure is!* He said, through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that 'all the nations of the earth will be blessed'—*through* them—not unilaterally, unboundedly to all of them.

Let's look at some of the other things, showing the love of God to the world—whether they are sinners or whether they are not sinners.

Matthew 5:43: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'.... [Even God showed that there's a difference between love and hate—correct? *Yes!*] ...But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (vs 43-44). Did not Jesus say, 'So Saul, is it hard for you to kick against the pricks and you persecute Me?' And was Saul, at that time, hateful toward God? *Yes!* In God's mercy, how did God deal with Saul who became Paul? Well, He struck him down and *called* him—correct? But he had to repent—correct? He had to stop his sinning—correct? *Yes!*

Verse 45: "So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good..." There are good people in the world, there are evil people in the world. The good people are not on a 'greased slide' to salvation, and the evil people are not on a 'greased slide' to ever-burning hell—God just hasn't called them, as you know, at this time.

"... and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust" (v 45). There you have it. That's still an expression of God *toward* those people—expression of God's love—whether they are sinners or whether

they are not sinners; whether they are good or evil; whether they are just or unjust.

Luke 6—we'll see the parallel account of it here. You cannot extrapolate this into meaning that *this is love unto salvation*. Love unto salvation is another thing.

Luke 6:35: "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and you shall be *the* children of the Highest; for He is good to the unthankful and *the* wicked."

(go to the next track)

In time, as we know through the Last Great Day, God is going to resurrect those who did evil to a second life in the flesh so they can have an opportunity for salvation. But since people have the *thought* that God is trying to save the world now, we must include everybody that we can. That's the whole motivation behind this ecumenical thing, and at the same time they take down Christ to level of Mohammad.

Let's see something here very important. Let's see what Paul said, and this will show us how God then expresses His love and goodness in keeping the covenant with Noah. All of these are because of the covenant that God made with Noah and his descendants—that means all human beings today, and with the earth. When he came into the city, which they had the priest of Jupiter and they had all of that going on.

They wanted to call Barnabus, *Jupiter* and Paul, *Mercurius*, because of the miracle that they did, Acts 14:15: "And saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, with the same nature as you, and we have been preaching the Gospel to you, *so that* you will turn from these vanities to the living God...'” Jupiter and Mercury have *the pagan equivalent* of Christmas and Easter and all that—right? *Yes!*

“...vanities to [to serve] the living God, Who made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all the things in them; Who in the past generations allowed all peoples to go in their *own* ways; though, indeed, He did not leave Himself without witness, in doing good to us from heaven *by* giving rain and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness” (vs 15-17).

That's an expression of God's love to the whole world to fulfill what He said there in the covenant with Abraham.

Let's see how God's love is *selective*. Can God be selective in His love? *Yes, He can!* Here we see that God's love is *selective* and it also is

conditional. When we enter into a relationship with God, like they did here, then we will see that it is *selective* and *conditional*.

Deuteronomy 7:6: "For you *are* a Holy people to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you..." If you choose someone different from someone else, is that not being *partial* or *selective*? Did not God choose Isaac and not Ishmael? The source of the world's problems today? *Yes!* Did not God choose Jacob and not Esau? *Yes!*

"...[He] has chosen you to be a special people to Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth.... [That is selective love—is it not?] ...The LORD did not set His love upon you nor choose you because you were more in number..." (vs 6-7). God defines definitely that *His love was selective*—right? *Absolutely!* It didn't go to the whole world—did it? If it does go to the whole world, when does God apply these things, especially with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Oh, the very first thing Jesus said when He began His ministry was '*Repent and believe the Gospel.*' It's the same thing that John the Baptist said. He said, 'Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.'

Verse 8: "But because the LORD loved you and because He would keep the oath, which He had sworn to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Therefore, know that the LORD your God, He *is* God, the faithful God Who keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him... [love is a two-way street; God's love to you must elicit back more love to Him] ...and keep His commandments, to a thousand generations. And he repays those who hate Him to their face..." (vs 8-10). Their God is love, which He is. Correction and repayment for their sins and their hatred also comes from God's love, but it is different expression of His love—it is a correction.

"...to destroy them. He will not be slow to repay him who hates Him. He will repay him to his face.... [I tell you, if there is anything that says that God's love is selective, there it is.] ... You shall therefore keep the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which I command you today to do them. And it shall come to pass, if you hearken to these judgments to keep and practice them, *then* the LORD your God shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore to your fathers. And He will love you..." (vs 10-13). *Conditional!* See, '*if you hearken*'—there is a condition to the love of God. What did Jesus say, '*If* you love Me, keep My commandments.' That's your condition. *If* you do these, then God will love you. It's the same way.

Verse 13: "He will love you and bless you

and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb, and the fruit of your land, your grain, and your wine, and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the flocks of your sheep, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you. You shall be blessed above all people....” (vs 13-14). Now, that’s partiality! That is not ecumenism; that is not the United Nations; that is not Communism. That *is* partiality.

“...There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock. And the LORD will take away from you all sickness and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you know, upon you. But He will lay them upon all who hate you” (vs. 14–15). So there you have it! That’s *selective*—isn’t it?

Deuteronomy 9:1—this is interesting, because He also reminds them of some things: “Hear, O Israel! You *are* to pass over Jordan today to go in to expel nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fenced up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the giants, whom you know and have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak!’ Therefore, understand this day that the LORD your God *is* He Who goes over before you. *Like* a consuming fire, He shall destroy them, and He shall bring them down before your face. So you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly as the LORD has said to you” (vs 1-3). When God has done that; when God has given something to you; when God has intervened in your life.

Verse 4: “Do not speak in your heart after the LORD your God has cast them out from before you, saying, ‘**For my righteousness...**’

- for my goodness
- for my strength
- for my ability
- for my brains
- for my cunning

—whatever you want to say.

“...‘For my righteousness, the LORD has brought me in to possess this land’; but for the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you. Not for your righteousness, or for the uprightness of your heart, do you go to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God drives them out from before you, so that He may perform the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob....” (vs 4-5). *Partiality! Yes, indeed!*

Verse 6: “Therefore, understand that the LORD your God does not give you this good land, to possess it for your righteousness, for you *are* a stiff-

necked people.” We can add right here, *the covenant that God gave to them was conditional*. **IF** you hearken and obey these blessings will come; **IF** you do not hearken and disobey these curses will come—correct? *Yes!*

Let’s come back to Romans, the ninth chapter, because we get into this argument: ‘In the New Testament, God is not partial.’ Yes, God *is partial*. And God’s love, though it is maintained to the world in the ways that I have covered, that does not mean that God’s love reaches out to all the world for salvation today. God’s love reaches out to those He *calls*. If He *calls* someone, that is a *selection*—right? What does it mean to be ‘the elect’?

The word *elect* in the Greek means: *one who is selected*. For example, within the group we have here: if I go along and I say, ‘Al, I want you to do this.’ Does that mean I disrespect all the rest of you, because I ask Al to do something? Does that mean that he has higher standing before me? *NO!* It just is, at this time, I want him do this and at some other time I may want you to do something—that’s all. So it is with the rest of the world.

- God chooses whom He will chose.
- God does what He does because He is God.

We will see how this operates, Romans 9:1: “I am telling you the Truth in Christ, I am not lying, my own conscience in *the* Holy Spirit bears witness with me That it is a great grief to me and an unceasing sorrow in my heart, causing me *even* to wish myself to be accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to *the* flesh; who are Israelites, to whom *is* the sonship and the glory, and the covenants and the giving of the law, and the service and the promises” (vs 1-4).

If he wished himself a curse, would God curse him to accomplish this for him? *No!* No more than God would have blotted out Moses’ name from book of Life, because when Moses pleaded for the children of Israel, after their sin. Remember, Moses said, ‘Forgive them Lord, and if You don’t, blot my name out of the book of Life.’ And God says, ‘I will blot out whom I will blot out.’

Verse 5: “Who are of *the* fathers, and from whom *came* the Christ according to *the* flesh, Who is over all—God blessed into the ages. Amen. However, this does not mean that the Word of God has failed because **not all of those who descend from Israel are Israel**” (vs 5-6).

What was Israel’s name before it was called Israel? *Jacob!* Who was born to Isaac and Rebecca? *Jacob and Esau!* All those of Esau, though they came from Jacob, are not of Israel.

He makes it clear—v 7: “Nor because they are Abraham’s seed does it mean that they *are* all children of the promise....”

- Is Ishmael of the seed of Abraham? *Yes!*
- Are they the spiritual children of God? *No!*
- Are they the physical children of God of Israel? *No!*

Verse 7: “...But ‘In Isaac shall your seed be called.’ That is, those who are the children of the flesh *are* not the children of God; rather, the children of the promise are reckoned as *the* seed... [Isaac and Jacob] ...because this *is* the word of promise: ‘According to this set time I will come, and Sarah shall have a son.’ And not only *that*, but Rebecca also having conceived by one, Isaac our father, But before *the children* had been born, or had done anything good or evil (in order that the purpose of God according to His own selection might stand—not of works, but of Him Who calls)” (vs 7–11).

Remember, God said, “there are two nations in your womb”—one was Esau, the other was Jacob. Where did the races come from? Can God create them, just like that? *No doubt about it!*

Verse 12: “It was said to her, ‘The elder shall serve the younger’.... [Has that happened? *Yes, indeed!*] ...Accordingly, it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, and Esau I hated’” (vs 12-13). Do we see that today? Does God hate the things that they are doing today? With all the terrorist things? *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 14: “What then shall we say? *Is there* unrighteousness with God?... [Is He partial and gives blessings to whom He will bless, and curses whom He curses?] ...MAY IT NEVER BE! For He said to Moses, ‘I will show mercy to whomever I show mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I have compassion.’ So then, *it is* not of the one who wills, nor of the one who runs; rather, *it is* of God, Who shows mercy. For the Scripture said to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up...’” (vs 14-17).

- gave him power
- gave him wealth
- gave him glory
- gave him honor
- let him be the representative of the head of the religion of Egypt—which represents Satan the devil

“...I raised you up in order that I might show in you My power, so that My name may be declared in all the earth.’.... [It still is through the Word of God—isn’t it? *Yes, indeed!*] ...So then, He shows mercy to whom He will, and He hardens whom He will. Will you then reply to me, ‘Why does He yet find fault? For who has opposed His purpose?’ Yes, indeed, O man, who are you to

answer against God? Shall the thing that is formed say to the one who formed *it*, ‘Why did you make me this way?’” (vs 17-20).

God has His reason for Esau. God has His reason for Ishmael. He said they would become a great people and He would bless them. But, He hasn’t called them to salvation. He did not call them into the physical relationship that He had with Israel and the promises given to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He has not called them unto salvation, at this particular time, as a nation. Nor, has He called Israel, at this particular time, unto salvation. So, He was drawing a very good lesson here to show that God is going to do His will, God is going to *call*, God is going to *select*, God is going to *show* His love to those whom He will show His love and give salvation to those whom He will call. And no one is going to stand in the face of God and ask, ‘Why are You doing thus?’

Verse 21: “Or doesn’t the potter have authority over the clay to make from the same lump of clay one vessel unto honor, and another vessel unto dishonor? And *who dares to question His purpose* if God, willing to show *His* wrath and to make known His power, chose in much long-suffering to put up with *the* vessels of wrath which were created for destruction... [Which we see happening in the world today—correct? *Yes!*] ...In order that He might make known the riches of His glory unto *the* vessels of mercy, which He prepared before for glory, those of us **whom He also called**, not from among *the* Jews only, but also from among *the* Gentiles?” (vs 21-24). Then He gives a little warning that God is able to do these things.

Why does God hate Esau? Hatred is the opposite of love—isn’t it? *Yes, it is!* But many people say it is the same side of the coin, or the opposite side of the coin. No, we’re not going to do an in-depth study of Esau, safe to say that. This is what God has said. Now, if this makes ecumenists unhappy, or if this makes people feel as though that God is *unjust*, then you better go read Rom. 9 again.

Malachi 1:1: “The burden of the Word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi. ‘I have loved you,’ says the LORD. ‘But you say, “In what way do You love us?” *Was* not Esau Jacob’s brother?’ says the LORD. ‘Yet I loved Jacob. And I hated Esau and made his mountains a desolation, and his inheritance *to be* for the jackals of the wilderness.’ If Edom says, ‘We are beaten down, but we will return and build the waste places,’—thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall be called the border of wickedness, and the people *with* whom the LORD *is* indignant forever. ‘And your eyes shall see, and you shall say, “The LORD will be magnified beyond the border of

Israel””” (vs 1-5). So, God hates Esau. One of the sons of Esau was Amalek.

Amalek is remembered and here is what God says of Amalek. God selected Israel, brought them out of Egypt, was bringing them to Mt. Sinai. God was bringing the children of Israel out into the wilderness, to give them the Ten Commandments, and:

Exodus 17:8: “Then Amalek came and *made war against* Israel in Rephidim.” Then Joshua and his troops would prevail as long as Moses’ hands were in the air. When they went down, Amalek would prevail. What they did, because Moses’ arms were weak, they took and moved a rock under his arms so he could hold them up, and hold the staff up, and the battle was theirs.

Verse 14: “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Write this as a memorial in a book, and rehearse *it* in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.’ And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it The LORD My Banner. And he said, ‘Because the LORD has sworn *that* the LORD *will have* war against Amalek from generation to generation”” (vs 14-16). Now, we’re experiencing part of that today. That’s part of what’s going on with Esau.

We have another Amalekite, the king called Agag. Here is God’s retribution to the Amalekites, 1-Samuel 15:2: “Thus says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will punish Amalek for *that* which he did to Israel, how he set against him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and strike Amalek, and completely destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and donkey”” (vs 2-3).

This would seem rather harsh if you didn’t know the Truth of the second resurrection. But, nevertheless, that is God’s judgment—isn’t it? Whether you count it fair or not, fairness is not equated with God in the way that human beings equate fairness. You know the rest of the story. They took the best of the sheep, the best of the cattle and they saved Agag, king of the Amalekites, alive. Saul’s action constituted rebellion, which is worst than witchcraft. He was then sentenced to losing his kingship and his dynasty, through his children, to be kings. The finality of it is this, is that Samuel had to hack Agag in pieces to fulfill the Word of God. Read the whole chapter, 1-Sam. 15. So, God will do those things that way.

Now let’s come and see some things that are very important for us to understand concerning God’s love and God’s way. Psalm 11:4: “The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD’S throne is in

heaven. His eyes behold; His searching gaze tests the children of men. The LORD tries the righteous, but **His soul hates the wicked** and the one who loves violence. Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone; and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup, **for the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness...**” (vs 4-7).

He loves righteousness, He hates iniquity. That’s what we read there, and remember what we covered in our series on Hebrews, the very first chapter. The reason that Jesus has the throne and sepulcher of power forever and ever is because He loved righteousness and hated lawlessness or iniquity.

Psalm 146:8: “The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD raises up those who are bowed down; **the LORD loves the righteous.**” We just saw that the Lord *hates* the evil; the Lord *loves* the righteous. So there we have it.

Now let’s see the conditional aspects of the love of God. *It is conditional!* It is boundless, but it’s conditional. And in it being conditional, God is the One Who limits Himself—correct? Many times ***our actions*** will limit God’s love to us, so He must correct us—which then is done in love (Heb. 12: ‘Whom the Lord loves He corrects’).

John 14:15: “If you love Me, keep the —namely My commandments.” We’ve gone over this many times, but in order to understand the basic Scriptures and the things we need to understand, many times we have to go back to these basic Scriptures. These basic Scriptures are those things that define for us *the foundation on which we understand the Word of God.*

Verse 21: “The one who has My commandments... [New Testament doctrine, the word from Jesus, the promise He spoke on the Passover night—correct?] ... and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me.” We have our part back to God. Part of loving God is keeping the commandments. Part of loving God is with the emotion, but you must have both parts. You can’t have one without the other. The Jews had commandments and laws *without love*. And granted, that was part of the sin of Worldwide, because they got into this Pharisaical attitude. So, we are to respond ***back to*** the love of God by keeping His commandments, and—that’s the responsibility of love—and with our whole hearts.

It is true that our love for God is greater than all doctrine, is greater than all the prophets, but yea, the love of God establishes all of those things because they flow from the love of God. Now, we saw the responsibility of needing to keep the commandments of God because we love Him. We will see that God will love us in return. But, where is

the emotional response that we have for God? And that emotional response is *a complete commitment to God, in love!*

Matthew 22:37: “And Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart...’” There is to be emotion, there is to be heart, there is to be feeling. But those emotions and heart and feeling do not override the necessity of keeping the commandments of God—they are part of it.

Just exactly as you would have with water. Water is composed of *hydrogen and oxygen*—H₂O equals water. Separate, you have two different components, which actually cause fire and make fire accelerate. If you put oxygen on fire it’s going to burn hotter. As a matter of fact, they do that to perfect steel, to make really hard steel. They blast oxygen into the furnace. Hydrogen burns! Isn’t amazing that God could take two opposites, combine them in a special way—of what we call H₂O and you use that to put fire out.

Likewise with the love of God. You cannot have just one part of it, because it will lead to licentiousness. If you think God’s love is just so boundless that it goes to everyone everywhere all the time; and you can’t have it where it’s just legalistic and law-keeping because there’s no love. *You must have both!*

“...‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and greatest commandment; and *the* second *one is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (vs 37-40). So, *the law* is based upon love! And keeping it requires faith.

Let’s see how this all comes together now. Yes, God’s love is boundless towards those who have repented, who’ve been baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit of God. And that love is boundless unto salvation through His grace, provided that we continue in His love. *God’s love is boundless to the world in the things that God has promised to them through the covenant of Noah*—but has nothing to do with salvation at this present time.

John 14:21: “The one who has My commandments... [*has them, has knowledge of them*] ...and is keeping them, that is the one who loves Me; and the one who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him.” So, there you have the two-way operation:

- the emotion, the obedience
- the commitment—your love to God, God’s love to you.

He says, ‘My Father will love him and I will love him.’ Does God love you? *Yes!* Does God love the world? *Yes*, in a different way! Sooner or later—through the plan of God, and as we know the meaning of the Last Great Day—God will extend salvation to those people God has not called now. If He hasn’t called them and selected them, then God has excluded them for this particular time. But, nevertheless, He gives them a measure of His love by the promises that He has given—which is not unto salvation.

Verse 23: “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word... [that’s much more than just commandments, that’s everything] ...and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.’” That’s through the power of the Holy Spirit, because then you are part of the temple of God.

Verse 24: “The one who does not love Me does not keep My words... [you could just phrase it this way: ‘He that keeps not My sayings, does not love Me.’ Would that not be also correct? *Yes, it would!*] ...and the word that you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s, Who sent Me” (vs 23-24).

Now, let’s see what Christ admonishes us to do—conditional. This shows a condition. God does not put a condition on Himself. The condition is always upon us, because we are the ones who are flesh; God is spirit.

John 15:7: “If you dwell in Me, and My words dwell in you, you shall ask whatever you desire, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit; so shall you be My disciples. As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you; live in My love” (vs 7-9).

- You need to understand that *Jesus loves you!*
- You need to understand that *the Father loves you!*

—and that is with a special love unto salvation, because you love Him with the whole heart and you keep His commandments—and, with all your heart, too.

He says “...live in My love. **If** you keep My commandments, you shall live in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and live in His love. These things I have spoken to you, in order that My joy may dwell in you, and *that* your joy may be full. This is My commandment: **that you love one another, as I have loved you**” (vs 9-12). Then He says that He laid His life down for His friends.

Let's see a prayer of Jesus that is partial. This is quite a prayer, and it *excludes* the world from those that are called.

John 17:6: "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You have given them to Me, and they have kept Your Word. Now they have known that all things that You have given Me are from You. For I have given them the words that You gave to Me; and they have received *them* and truly have known that I came from You; and they have believed that You did send Me. **I am praying for them...**" (vs 6-9)—selected prayer—correct?

Verse 9: "I am not praying for the world... [Therefore, God's blessing and God's love, He has determined Himself to limit!...]but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All Mine are Yours, and all Yours *are* Mine; and I have been glorified in them. And I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, those whom You have given Me, so that they may be one, even as *We are one*" (vs 9-11). They are not at one with the world—that won't happen until later

Verse 12: "When I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name. I protected those whom You have given Me, and not one of them has perished except the son of perdition, in order that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. But now I am coming to You; and these things I am speaking *while yet* in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in them. I have given them Your words, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You would take them out of the world, but that You would **keep them from the evil one**" (vs 12–15).

So, we need to realize in this time that we're living in, God will keep us from the 'evil one.'

- ***God's love is partial!***
- ***God's love is special!***
- ***God's love is conditional!***

Though it is boundless to those who love Him and keep His commandments; and His grace is there to cover our sins, it doesn't give us license to do anything we *feel* that is good and *feel* as though that God is required to accept us the way we are without repentance and change.

The long and short of the story is that in order to love God you can't possibly do away with His commandments and go keep all the pagan days of the world and say, 'we're delivered to do this' and because 'I feel good about it, therefore I praise God for Easter and Christmas and chocolate Easter bunnies.'

God is going to have something else, different, to say that later on.

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- 11) Matthew 5:43-45
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- 14) Deuteronomy 7:6-15
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- 16) Romans 9:1-24
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- 18) Exodus 17:8, 14-16
- 19) 1 Samuel 15:2-3
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