

“ESAU HAVE I HATED”

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In Malachi 1:2-3, the Lord says, “*Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.*” John Calvin and his followers have used this passage and others to teach the false doctrine that God has predestined on an individual basis who will be saved and who will be lost and that there is nothing anyone can do to change it. As alleged evidence to support this heresy, Calvinists say that God arbitrarily chose to hate Esau *the person* and love Jacob his brother from before they were born. But in this passage, God actually means that He hated Esau *the nation* because of her wickedness.

Malachi speaks of nations, not individuals

The Book of Malachi begins with these words: “The burden of the word of the Lord *to Israel* by Malachi” (Mal 1:1). This clearly establishes that the book is written to the *nation* of Israel. In verses two and three, the Lord makes a contrast between Israel and Esau. Thus, the context of Malachi 1:2-3 does not pertain to Jacob and Esau the individuals. The context pertains to the nations that wore their names, which consisted of their physical descendants. First, God says, “I have loved *you*,” obviously referring to the nation of Israel. Israel replies, “Wherein hast thou loved *us*?” The plural again demonstrates that the nation of Israel (or Jacob) is under consideration. God proves that He loved Israel by pointing out that He had hated and overthrown Edom (or Esau). Edom was laid waste, “impoverished,” and would continue to be thrown down and receive God’s indignation because of her wickedness (Mal 1:3-4). This God had done to the nation of Esau, not Esau the individual. Malachi was obviously written *after* God had brought destruction upon the nation of Edom. He had foretold this destruction through the prophets, as it would be His judgment upon that nation for her wickedness (see Isa 11:14; Jer 25:14-21; 49:7-22; Ezek 25:12-14; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11-12). The entire book of Obadiah is a prophecy of Edom’s destruction, especially because of her hatred and cruelty towards Israel. Therefore, in Malachi chapter one, concerning both Jacob and Esau, God is talking about the nations, and how God felt toward each was a response to their behavior, not the result of Calvinistic predestination.

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(continued)

Quotation in Romans

Malachi 1:2-3 is quoted in Romans 9:13 as evidence of the fact that God fulfilled His promise to Abraham through Isaac and then Jacob, not Ishmael or Esau. Romans 9:10-12 reminds us that God ordained that the promises and blessings would come through Jacob rather than Esau from when they were in their mother's womb, before either of them had done any good or evil. In Genesis 25:23, the Lord spoke to Isaac's wife Rebekah concerning the twins she was carrying in her womb: *“Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.”* Although God ordained that the elder (Esau) would serve the younger (Jacob), who would serve whom had nothing to do with their salvation. Neither the context of Malachi 1:2-3 nor that of Romans 9:4-14 has anything to do with the issue of anyone's salvation. It does not speak of God choosing the eternal destination of individuals arbitrarily. No scripture does. Romans chapter nine merely teaches us that God chooses to give certain talents, abilities, blessings, opportunities, etc. to each person and these things are strictly up to God's will and prerogative. God fulfilled his promises of land, numerous descendants, and the birth of Christ through Isaac and Jacob. This in no way precluded or prevented Ishmael's or Esau's obedience to God and the salvation of their souls.

Furthermore, the remote context of Romans chapter nine is completely contrary to Calvinism: that God's mercy is conditional upon faith, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom 9:6-8,22-30). The truth is that God will give mercy to those who obey His word and become new creatures. It *is* conditional (Gal 6:15-16). The ones God wills to give mercy to are those who fear Him (Luke 1:50), which is man's *choice* (Prov 1:29). God will give mercy to the merciful (Matt 5:7; Jas 2:13), which proves that there are conditions. God's will is to have mercy on all (Rom 11:32), but He has given man conditions to meet and the choice to meet them. The ultimate point of this passage is to show that God was righteous to choose to end the covenant with Israel because of their unbelief.