

**GREG ALBRECHT** *Loving Sinners, Hating Sins?*

God loves sinners, but he hates their sins” is a shallow platitude and cliché that devalues God’s love and seemingly gives us permission to diminish how we extend his love to others. How do we know what God hates, exactly? Where do we find a teaching that commands us to despise and detest?

“God loves sinners but he hates their sins” subverts everything Jesus ever taught.

“God loves sinners but he hates their sins” may sound great on the surface but it severely limits the dimensions of God’s love. Jesus did not tell us God loves us if our behavior measures up to an acceptable standard. Jesus told us that God is love, period, no qualifications. Jesus told us to love sinners, period. Jesus said “love your neighbor” but he did not qualify our love of neighbor by saying we must hate their sin.

God is love. He is good, not evil.

When we say God “hates” we are introducing the next step – invites humans to identify, prioritize and target who and what God hates, specifically.

Sin is sin – evil is evil – failing to live perfectly is failure. We all fail. God is love and he does not give us a list that prioritizes some sins as worse than others. Don’t get sucked into that trap. John 3:16 tells us that God loves *the world* and the next verse says that Jesus did not “come into this world to condemn the world.”

Imagine that! Jesus didn’t come into this world to condemn the world yet many of those who claim to represent him make condemnation of those who do not agree with them one of their highest priorities!

Many religious people don’t comprehend how, nor do many even believe, that God actually does love everyone because they do not accept and believe the predominant definition of God – God is love. *God is love – which is an entirely different dynamic than saying he has love.*

Many people who are ritual-observing, ceremony-compliant, dues-paying members of

religious institutions believe God is angry with virtually everyone. They believe their own religious holy huddle barely escapes God’s wrath because of their compliance to religious dogma and authority. But, while they believe they only just escape the wrath of God, they believe the unsaved, lost, unbelievers, pagans and heretics who are steeped in their sins are up the creek without a paddle.

Many religious people are far from convinced that God loves them with his “in-spite-of love” as opposed to a “because-of-your-performance love.” They are absolutely persuaded that God is filled with wrath. Try telling someone who believes in an angry, wrathful God that God loves everyone. You will quickly discover that ***people get angry with anyone who tries to take away their angry God.***

Many believe in an angry God because they need an angry God. Ironically, they need a God of hate to help them feel better! Christ-less religion is quick to accommodate such a desire.

When Christ-less religion feels its mandate and mission is to condemn sin, those enslaved to that religiously-fueled outlook fall prey to pride and self-righteousness. Because many “devout” and religious folks presume they are avoiding really bad sins, they feel that God loves them more. The un-Christlike saying, “God loves sinners but hates sin” leads to condemnation, so that religious authorities feel justified in prioritizing and enumerating, in God’s name, the sins they say God hates the most.

Jesus never disdained or looked down his nose on anyone, but if there was ever any behavior that he resisted, it was when religious authorities of his day regarded others who differed with them as utterly contemptible.

“God loves sinners but hates their sins” almost invariably leads a person to focus on the perceived sins of others rather than looking in the mirror at their own shortcomings.

God doesn’t love us for any imagined virtues that we produce or righteous deeds we perform. We cannot earn God’s love, nor can we lose it. □