

Romans 9:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.

Analysis

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated—Paul quotes Malachi 1:2-3, using the prophetic perfect to describe God's eternal disposition. The Greek *ēgapēsa...emisēsa* (ἠγάπησα...ἐμίσησα) renders Hebrew *ahav...sane* (אָהַב...שָׂנֵא). This isn't emotional hatred but covenantal choice—God set his *hesed* love on Jacob, withholding it from Esau. The contrast is electing love vs. non-election, not love vs. malice.

The Malachi context addresses nations (Israel/Edom) 400+ years after the patriarchs, proving God's choice had historical consequences. Yet the oracle 'before birth' (v. 11) establishes that God's love didn't arise from Jacob's attractiveness or Esau's repulsiveness. Election is God loving whom he chooses to love. 'Hatred' here means passing over in election, leaving in just condemnation. None deserve love; that some receive it magnifies grace. That others don't receive what none deserve demonstrates justice.

Historical Context

Malachi prophesied circa 430 BC against Edom's gloating over Jerusalem's fall (Obadiah, Malachi 1:2-5). Esau's descendants embodied enmity toward God's people. Paul uses this to show election's permanence: God's choice endures across centuries and determines ultimate destinies.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. How does understanding 'hatred' as covenantal non-election rather than emotional malice help interpret this verse?
2. Why is it grace that anyone receives electing love, not injustice that some don't?
3. How does God's love for Jacob 'before he had done good or evil' ensure our assurance isn't based on performance?

Interlinear Text

καθὼς	γέγραπται	Τὸν	Ἰακώβ	ἠγάπησα	τὸν	δὲ	Ἡσαῦ
As	it is written	G3588	Jacob	have I loved	G3588	but	Esau
G2531	G1125		G2384	G25		G1161	G2269
ἐμίσησα							
have I hated							
G3404							

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 21:15 (Love): If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated: