

Malachi 1:1-5

September 25, 2017

Absolutely and Forever His.

1. **Malachi 1:1.** "The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi."
 - a. Oracle = "Burden". Malachi = "My messenger."
 - b. Right off the bat, we discover that Malachi had a burden. He had been given a message from God to Israel and it needed to be delivered accurately, completely, and clearly.
 - c. The message included fabulous news and unparalleled hope, but it started with a lot of bad news...and a lot of stuff that people would find offensive.
 - d. Not only that but, based on Israel's history, it was probably going to be completely rejected and Malachi was probably going to be ostracized.
 - e. And yet, it was exactly the message that Israel needed to hear in order to be saved from hell and so that it could have access to unending joy at the end of time (**Malachi 4:2**).
2. The message was in the form of six disputes or interrogations between God and Israel.
3. **Malachi 1:2-5** is the first of six disputes. Let's read it together.
 - a. "I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, "How have you loved us?" "Is not Esau Jacob's brother?" declares the Lord. "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the Lord of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country' and 'the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.'" Your own eyes shall see this, and you shall say, "Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel!"
4. We are going to look at three questions this afternoon.
 - a. Why did Israel question God's love?
 - b. Why did God answer the way He does?
 - c. What should be our response?
5. Why did Israel question God's love?
 - a. God had showed his love to them in so many ways. Most of the Bible describes God's unique relationship with the Jews.
 - i. They were God's chosen people.
 - ii. God had miraculously delivered them from slavery in Egypt and taken them to the "promised land."
 - iii. He had dwelled among them, first in the tabernacle and then in the temple.
 - iv. He had given them some faithful prophets.
 - v. He had blessed them with material goods.
 - vi. He had repeatedly forgiven their sins and restored their relationship with Him.
 - vii. At all times and under every circumstance, He had been faithful to His covenant with them.
 - b. And yet...in **Malachi 1:3** they have the audacity to question God. They try to turn the tables and put God on trial rather than vice versa.

- c. They had forgotten God's love for at least 4 reasons. Lest we be too harsh with them, don't forget how easy it is for us to question God's love as well.
 - i. They had forgotten how sinful they had been in the past. We know this because they were straying back to the same sins that had put them into exile in the first place.
 - 1. Malachi lists at least six of Israel's sins.
 - a. Irreverent and hypocritical in worship.
 - b. Apathetic to truth.
 - c. Rebellious to their covenant with God.
 - d. Faithless in their marriages.
 - e. Unjust in their relationships with each other.
 - f. Thieving from God by being stingy in their offerings.
 - 2. And yet, they thought they were doing a pretty good job...and that God was the one who was failing. They were going through the motions on the surface of their lives...and they thought that was enough.
 - 3. They thought too highly of themselves which, in turn, led them to think too little of God.
 - ii. They were tired of waiting.
 - 1. Again, it was roughly 100 years since King Cyrus signed the order for the Jews to return from exile to their homeland.
 - 2. It was roughly 80 years since Haggai and Zechariah had encouraged them to rebuild the temple with promises of God's blessing, engrafting of the nations into Israel, prosperity, expansion, peace, and the return of God's own glorious presence. **(Haggai 2; Zech. 1:16–17; 2:1–13; 8:1–9:17)**
 - 3. None of that had happened yet.
 - a. Instead of fame and fortune, they had famine.
 - b. They were regularly oppressed by their neighbors.
 - c. They were not an independent nation.
 - d. They were not a significant political player in the region.
 - 4. Life was different than they expected.
 - iii. They had forgotten God's graciousness.
 - 1. It's frighteningly easy to forget God's faithfulness in the past when we are questioning God's goodness in the present.
 - 2. Life was tough. It may even have been really tough.
 - 3. However,
 - a. They were still back in Canaan!
 - b. They were able to govern themselves.
 - c. Jerusalem had been rebuilt
 - d. The temple was less impressive than it had been centuries before...but a temple had been rebuilt!
 - 4. They just didn't have the eyes to see it.

- iv. Ultimately, the reason they questioned God's love is because they had wandering hearts.
 - 1. God didn't do what they wanted...so they became bored with God.
 - 2. Their stuff started looking more desirable.
 - 3. They started looking for joy elsewhere.
 - 4. They thought that God was more of a nuisance than a savior.
- 6. Why did God answer the way He does?
 - a. This is a strange way to say "I love you."
 - i. Teenage boys...if you ever get married and your wife asks how you have loved her...this is not a good way to answer!
 - ii. Quite frankly, it is shocking...and almost feels wrong...except God can do no wrong!
 - b. However, it is one of the central themes in Malachi.
 - i. Malachi is trying to wake the Jews from their apathy.
 - ii. He does it by showing them a God who is so tremendously holy, good, powerful, awe inspiring, sovereign, and majestic that the only appropriate reaction is to reverently fear and adore Him.
 - 1. Those terms are not contradictory.
 - 2. C.S Lewis describes this well in the Chronicles of Narnia. Lucy asks the Beaver if Aslan is "safe" to be around. The beaver responds "Safe? Of course, he is not safe. But is he is good. He is the king."
 - iii. Malachi is trying to defibrillate the Jews' heart back to life.
 - iv. He answers them in the most shocking way possible so that they will humble themselves and turn back to God.
 - c. It's possible that you might not know the story of Jacob and Esau. You can find it in **Genesis 25:21-28**.
 - i. "And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her, and she said, "If it is thus, why is this happening to me?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb (Israel from Jacob...and Edom from Esau), and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger." When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau's heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau because ^she ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.
 - d. **Malachi 1:2**. "Is not Esau your brother?: Yes!
 - i. He was the twin brother.
 - ii. He was the older brother...because he was born first.

- iii. By all rights, he should have had the greater inheritance.
- e. And yet...God says "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated." (**Malachi 1:2-3.**)
 - i. Jacob and his descendants were chosen to be God's people. Jacob was chosen before he was born, before he had done anything good or bad, and before he knew anything about God.
 - ii. Esau and his descendants have a very different future.
 - 1. **Malachi 1:2-4.** "Yet I have loved Jacob but Esau I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the Lord of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country' and 'the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.'"
 - 2. They will be opposed by God.
 - 3. They will continue in their wickedness.
 - 4. Because of that, they will face God's justice and wrath forever.
 - iii. Esau and his descendents are not being treated unjustly here. They will receive the full penalty for their sin and not a single bit more. Jacob, however, is spared from the penalty that he also deserves and is chosen to be one of God's children.
- f. How does this answer the Jews' question? God is saying "I have loved you with a free, sovereign, unconditional, electing love." (*John Piper, Sermon from 10/4/1987*)
 - i. "My love for you is electing love because I chose you for myself above your brother Esau."
 - ii. "My love for you is unconditional love because I chose you before you had done anything good or evil – before you had met any conditions – while you were still in your mother's womb."
 - iii. "My love for you is sovereign love because I was under no constraint to love you; I was not forced or coerced; I was totally in charge when I set my love upon you."
 - iv. "And my love for you is free because it's the overflow of my infinite grace that can never be bought."
- g. God's "free, sovereign, unconditional, electing love" is a theme that is throughout the New Testament. It may make you feel uncomfortable. It can be really hard to understand. It may not even make logical sense to you. However, it is true. It is meant to comfort us. It should humble us. It should make us worship.
 - i. **Acts 13:48:** "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed."
 - ii. **Romans 8:28-30:** "For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his son."
 - iii. **Romans 9:11-13:** (Speaking about Jacob and Esau) "Though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls—"

she (Jacob and Esau's mother) was told, "The older will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

- iv. **Ephesians 1:4:** "He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him."
- v. **2 Thessalonians 2:13:** "We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved."

h. Election explained

- i. Jesus Christ died for all.
- ii. His sacrifice was and is sufficient to ransom every sinner that has ever lived.
- iii. He did this because He loved the entire world. **John 3:16.** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."
- iv. He offers forgiveness and adoption to every human being.
- v. God wants everyone to be saved. **1 Timothy 2:4.** "God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
- vi. However, in a way that is difficult to understand but is certainly true because that is what the Bible teaches, God chose who would belong to Him before He created the world.
- vii. Those whom he chose will hear the message of Jesus Christ and willingly choose to turn away from their sin, accept Jesus' offer of forgiveness, be adopted as sons or daughters of God, and spend eternity with Him in heaven. God is not forcing them to do anything they do not want to do. He restores their sight and quickens their heart so that they have new eyes to see and new affections.
- viii. Those who are not chosen will willingly choose to embrace their sin. They will willingly choose to continue hating God. They will willingly choose to belittle Jesus Christ. They will willingly choose to love darkness instead of light. They will willingly choose to resist God's Holy Spirit. God is not forcing them to do anything they do not want to do either.
- ix. God's electing love does not nullify man's responsibility or man's free will. It does not turn human beings into puppets. However, without God's direct intervention in the human heart, every human being will choose to run away from God and to be an enemy of God.

7. I asked earlier if you have ever questioned God's love for you. What is his answer for you?

- a. If you are a Christian...
 - i. God freely chose you to be one of His children.
 - ii. He chose you even though there was nothing appealing about you.
 - 1. You were not God's #1 draft pick.
 - 2. You were not a diamond in the rough.
 - 3. Your good parts did not outweigh your bad parts.
 - 4. You did not have a significant upside.
 - 5. You were not better than anyone else.

- iii. And yet...God freely chose you to be one of His children and to spend eternity with you in heaven.
 - 1. That should comfort you.
 - 2. That should humble you. There is no room for pride or self-reliance in Christianity.
 - 3. That should inspire you to evangelize. It certainly inspired Paul.
 - a. **2 Timothy 2:10.** "I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they may also obtain salvation in Christ Jesus with its eternal glory."
- iv. You are His because God chose you to be His.
- v. Because you are His, God is never going to give up on you. He is never going to stop loving you. He is never going to stop working on you. He is never going to throw you away. You are His, absolutely and forever.
- b. If you are not a Christian...
 - i. Then you are currently God's enemy. As far as God is concerned, there is no such thing as a "spiritual" person, "religious" person, or "good" person that does not love, treasure, and worship Him. You are either part of God's family or you are God's enemy.
 - ii. God always wins. If you are God's enemy, you are doomed to lose. That means going to hell forever.
 - iii. However, God demonstrated his love for you by dying for you.
 - 1. **Romans 5:6-8.** "For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
 - iv. Today is a perfect time to switch sides, to join His team rather than fighting against Him. God offers you complete forgiveness, a restored relationship with Him, perfect joy, perfect peace, and an eternity life and happiness with Him.
 - v. How will you respond?
 - 1. Will you turn to him?
 - 2. Will you acknowledge that you have rebelled against him?
 - 3. Will you ask him to forgive you?
 - 4. Will you start treasuring him above all else?
 - 5. Will you acknowledge God's greatness by declaring, like Israel in **Malachi 1:5**, "Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel?"