

“Faithful God” (Malachi 1:1-5)

For the week of April 23, 2017

Background/Context

Malachi (meaning “messenger”) is the final book of the 12 Minor Prophets, which cover a period of about 350 years. These 12 books are called minor not because of their perceived worthiness or importance, but because the prophecies are shorter. At the time of Malachi’s writing, the spiritual condition of the people was awful. Some wanted to scale back on their worship of God. Others were skeptical of the worth of worshipping at all. Reading through this short book will reveal the sins of the day: adultery, lying, oppression of the poor, ungodly marriages, stealing God’s tithes and offerings, sacrifices that were inferior, and so on. Sound familiar? They had a casual approach to the worship of God, and the priests were not giving proper spiritual direction.

Malachi starts with the people’s failure to recognize God’s love for them (1:2). Instead they are indifferent in seeking God, and they didn’t care about the urgent warnings and predictions. Their spiritual indifference led to a defiant, harsh attitude that would lead to their destruction unless they repented (4:6). The key theme for this book is: “Though we are faithless, God remains faithful.”

Read Malachi 1:1-5

In this passage Israel shows disrespect for God’s love, yet He continues to be patient with them. This first dispute sets the tone and structure for the remaining five. How does God love Israel (Jacob’s descendants)? He loves by hating (meaning rejecting/allying Himself against) Edom. Edom was Esau’s descendants. Key theme of this passage: God’s love toward His people is faithful.

How are you faithful to God? List the ways a believer is faithful to God. Why are adhering to spiritual disciplines important in showing faithfulness to God?

As you now think of God, how has God been faithful to you? List examples of God’s faithfulness in your life. It might be something ongoing or a specific occurrence. Share in your group.

Questioning God’s love is the first step into sin (Malachi 1:1-2a)

God declares “I have loved you.” In a healthy relationship the response would probably be “I know, thank you. I love you too!” But God’s people don’t have a healthy relationship with God. They respond, “How have you loved me?” Matt’s point in his sermon was whenever we complain we are saying to God, how have you loved me? We do it every time we complain.

How does the following line illustrate this? “If you really loved me God, you would make this different; you would have taken care of this. But you haven’t so you must not love me.” How would you disciple someone who felt this way?

Read Genesis 3:1-7. Satan was successful in planting doubt and having Adam and Eve question if God really loved them. In 2017, how does Satan try to get us to question the love of God?

None of us is deserving of God's love (Malachi 1:2b-4)

Matt said the following in his sermon: "Complaining reveals that we believe we are entitled to more than what God is giving us, when in reality, we don't deserve anything besides hell. We should be grateful for anything better than hell yet we don't because we forgot. So what are you complaining about in your life right now?" Discuss in your group.

God's love is a gift of His electing grace (Malachi 1:2b)

God is totally free and gives His mercy, compassion and love freely as a gift. He doesn't owe anyone. Ephesians 2:8-9 clearly identifies God's grace. The highest love God can show you is not because of anything you did, it is because He chose to love you.

Read Romans 5:1-21. Discuss this passage as it relates to God's grace.

None of us will question God's love in the end (Malachi 1:5)

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