

This morning, if you want to get out your Bibles, we're going to be in the book of Malachi, and we are going to begin the very last book in the Old Testament, but also the very last book in our 20 year journey, chapter by chapter and verse by verse, through the Bible. One person is excited. All right. This morning, what I'd like to do is we get off the ground in this study through Malachi, is to read the first five verses and unpack those. So we're going to start with reading, and then we'll go where the Lord leads. Chapter one, verse 1. The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi I have loved you, says the Lord. Yet you say, in what way have you loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? Says the Lord, yet, Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness, even though Edom has said, we have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places. Thus says the Lord of hosts, they may build, but I will throw down. They shall be called the territory of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever. Verse five. Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, the Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel. Well, the name Malachi means my messenger, and nothing is known of him past that except that he wrote this book. Malachi is the last of the Old Testament prophets. The book of Malachi occupies its correct place in the chronology of the Old Testament, which not all prophets do, but he indeed is the last person to prophesy before a five. Well, 400 years silent period. And Matthew coming on the scene to present to us Jesus Christ. He writes. Then around 430 BC, which, if you've been here in our studies through Haggai and Zechariah, this is about 100 years after Zechariah prophesied and the temple was rebuilt. Now, to give you some further context, the Jews returned from Babylon in three different waves. First, what we have been studying in the past few months. 536 BC Zerubbabel and Joshua led a return to rebuild the temple, and again that's covered in Haggai and Zechariah. Second, in 458 BC, so about 80 years later, Ezra the priest led a return to rebuild the worship system or to rebuild the people spiritually, and many people believe that Ezra was actually the guy who collated what we now have as our Old Testament. Finally, Nehemiah led a return to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem in 45 BC, and so Malachi ministers after Nehemiah. After all this has happened. So 586 BC, a million people carried off into captivity over the course of the next hundred or so years. There are three waves of people that return, and by now there's a temple and a sacrificial system back in place, a worship system, you might say, and the walls and the city have been rebuilt, but the people are still in shambles spiritually. That's kind of the idea. Malachi may be viewed as an Old Testament in miniature or a summary, you might say, of the entire Old Testament. As you read Malachi, the way it's laid out is the selection of Israel by God. And then the transgression of Israel against God, and then the manifestation of the Messiah comes to redeem Israel. Then the tribulation of the nations that surround Israel, and

finally the purification of Israel at last. And of course, that's really the way the Old Testament is laid out. And we've seen this as we studied through the prophets, the book of Malachi is built around seven questions. You have to understand this to understand how the book is laid out. So God's going to give a statement and then in response, the people have questions in some of your translations, it will be stated differently. If you had an old King James, the key word is actually wherein. And my new King James it's in what way? But that's the key phrase in the book. And so the book starts out, I have loved you, says the Lord. The people's response. First question, chapter 1, verse 2. Well, in what way have you loved us? Chapter one, verse 6. We'll get to this next week. In what way have we despised your name? Chapter one, verse 7. In what way have we defiled you? Chapter two, verse 17. In what way have we wearied God? Chapter three, verse 7. In what way shall we return? In chapter 3, verse 8, in what way have we robbed you? And then finally it should be translated in what way? In what way have we spoken against you? So those seven questions, the book is built around in this case, we begin with God's opening line. His statement to this people who, even though they're back in the land and it's better off than it was 100 years ago, in some ways, there's still tore up from the floor up. And so God's opening line to his people is, I have loved you. This is the key verse in Malachi. This is the key theme when they're actually at one of their lowest points and they are God states, I have loved you. Now this book is actually supposed to bring comfort to the people of God. But unfortunately it has caused confusion among the people of God. And that is because of these opening lines that we will look at today. The idea that God loved Jacob and hated Esau makes people very uncomfortable. It deals with the doctrine or the teaching of divine election. God choosing. Or does man choose? How does that work? How can God love one and hate another? And so while God, his love is the thing that should be noticed, unfortunately it's the question, well, what if God hates me? What if he hates me like he hated Esau? And so we're going to unpack some of that this morning. Now, the opening statement is God has loved these people, but their response is, well, in what way have you loved us? Israel doubted God's love. They couldn't recognize his blessings. Undoubtedly, it was difficult to live in Jerusalem at the time they lived there again. Maybe better than previous generations, but not the best generation ever. And so it was tough. And they began to doubt God's love as they looked around at the difficulty of their life. As I have here for you. Doubt skews our perspective. James says. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. He's tossed to and fro like the waves of the sea. By the way, thinking about doubt, what do you call an anti-vaccination nanny? Mrs. Doubtfire? Now, some of you are too young to get that. And some of you, as anti-vaxxers, are easy. It's a joke. Breathe in, breathe out. That's still pretty funny.

Mrs. Doubtfire.

Okay, anyway, I was thinking about that and I was thinking, well, there's a little bit more than a little Israelite in me. I, too, sometimes doubt God's love. And so I asked myself, do I recognize God's love in my life? And how does God say that he proclaims his love or displays it to us? There are two ways it's by his grace, but there are two different types of grace in the Bible. I have them here for you. Ways of grace that God displays his love for us. The first one is God's, you might say common grace. Jesus talks about this in Matthew chapter 5, verse 45, when he's compelling readers to love their enemies and he says, you need to love your enemies because God loves them. He, in this sense causes the rain to come down on the just and the unjust. They don't deserve the rain, but God gives it to them anyway. It's his common grace because God is love. Then God's grace is displayed, at least in some measure. Commonly upon the just and the unjust. I was reading this and pondering this when Lucinda, she sometimes reads to me from the women's Bible study they have on Mondays here, and they are studying the book of James. And so she said, hey, I want to read this to you. And so I thought I would share it with you guys from the book that they're reading. It said this, if I have food in my pantry and I have clothes on my back and I have a roof over my head and I have a bed to lay in, I am richer than 75% of the world, all things that most of us take for granted. If I've never experienced war, and that is not that I've been off to war, but that war has come to my hometown or my country, or my residence. If I've never experienced war imprisonment, torture, or starvation, I'm ahead of 500 million people. That's most of us in this room. I'd venture to say. And if I have money in the bank, some money in my wallet, and I have some spare change, maybe in my car. I'm a top eight percenter in the world. Have you ever thought about your life as the top 8% in all the world? So we have a lot of God's common grace that's been bestowed upon us. And so God loves us. He blesses us. And we in America above measure really in many ways. But then the second type of grace is even more important. The love of God is seen through his. It's called sometimes special grace or his salvific grace. In Romans chapter 5 verse 8 says that really, you don't have to go past this. All you need to know about God and His love for you is that while you and I were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Special grace that he intervened in human history to give us a chance to know the Lord. He died for us. So the people's question, well, in what way have you loved us? Well, here's God's answer was not Esau. Jacob's brother, yet Jacob, I loved Israel. That's you, Esau. I have hated Jacob, and Esau were brothers. We'll unpack this more in just a minute. Jacob's line became Israel, as I just mentioned. His name was actually changed to Israel. And then Esau. His brother's line became the nation of Edom. And they lived. You can see the map right next to one another, the Jordan River

separates them, essentially. Now the context is, as God addresses this, that both of you became nations. But I loved one and I hated the other. And this has proved out by the fact that the Babylonians, Nebuchadnezzar at the helm, invaded this area in 586 BC. We've talked about this a bunch. They didn't just take Jerusalem out of the land. They scattered all of the countries around Jerusalem, including the Edomites. But God says, look at you, Israel. You're back in the land. You have a temple, you have a worship system, you have walls, you have laws. I've reestablished you as a nation and a society. But look at Edom. They are still not a nation. And even though they say we're going to build back better, it's never going to happen. That's proof that I love you. If you need to know in what way have I loved you? Now here's the dilemma, Jacob. I have loved, and Esau I have hated. Before the boys were ever born, the younger son, Jacob, was picked by God to be greater than his big brother Esau. In fact, I'll refer you back to Genesis 25. That's the narrative. I'll start in verse 21. Now, Isaac, that is the son of Abraham, pleaded with the Lord for his wife, because she was barren, and the Lord granted his plea. And Rebecca, his wife, conceived. But the children struggled within her. And she said, if all is well, why am I like this? So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, two nations are in your womb. Two peoples shall be separated from your body. One people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger. Now culturally, this wasn't how it was supposed to go. The older always got the double portion. They always got the first rights and responsibilities. And so God chose Jacob and rejected Esau, the older brother, before they were ever born. Now God chooses them, but he also, in similar fashion, chooses you and I. By the way, because we are told that in Ephesians chapter 1, verse four, God has chosen us before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless, and to experience his love. The Bible teaches that no one gets to heaven because they earn it. God doesn't choose us because we did a good enough job to get into heaven. It's simply because God chooses us. Now, in thinking about that, there's a theological word we throw around within the Christian church, which is God's sovereignty. It simply means that God can do whatever he wants. Ground zero as it pertains to knowing the Lord. You have to understand God, who created everything, can do whatever he wants. He doesn't ask for permission of anyone. So God can choose one and not choose another. Couple questions come up just because he can. Does he? And then secondly, if he does, then why does God pick one and not another? Or you might say, If God does choose like he did Jacob and Esau, how does God choose? And of course, Romans chapter 9, verses 10 through 16 tells us that God chose again Jacob and Esau, and he did according to his own will. And he didn't do it because of anything other than he has mercy upon whom he has mercy on, and he has compassion upon whom he has compassion on. So what do we do with that? How did God do it? Why did he do it? Well, the answer is found in Romans

chapter 8, verse 28. And I'll read down to verse 30, and we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, and those who are called according to his purpose. For whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of His son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he predestined, these he also called, whom he called. These he also justified, and whom he justified. These he also glorified. So popping over back to Romans nine, as I referenced of the story, we're looking at, it says that when Rebekah had conceived by one man, even our father Isaac, for the children not being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him who calls. It was said to her, the older shall serve the younger, as it is written. And he quotes from our text in Malachi Jacob, I have loved, but Esau I have hated. What then shall we say? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not. For he says to Moses, I will have mercy on whomever. I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever. I will have compassion. So then it's not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. God did it again. This is the biblical example of God picking before someone was even born. But what does Romans eight chapter 8, chapter 8? I'm going to get it out here in a second eight.

Chapter eight. Chapter eight. Chapter. What is wrong? What does Romans eight.

Verse 28 through 30 say? That God chooses based upon. Notice his for and foreknowledge. While some in the Christian church believe that's God's for choosing the obvious definition from the Scripture is that foreknowledge isn't God's for choosing, that would actually be predestination. His predestination is actually based on his foreknowledge, which means knowledge or awareness of what someone will do before they do it. That's how God works. He's not confined to time and space like us. So he looks down through the corridors of time and he chooses or elects unconditionally based upon his foreknowledge. So whom he foreknew, Romans eight tells us, he predestined. The Bible says to understand this, that no one is good, no, not one. In fact, I'll read from Romans chapter 3, verse 10. It says, that is written. It's written like this. There is none righteous, no, not one. There is no one who understands. There's no one who seeks after God. They've all turned aside, and they have together become unprofitable. There's no one who does good. No, not one. Contrary to our culture. The Bible states that there aren't any good people. Now, sometimes people say, well, why do bad things happen to good people? And the biblical answer is there aren't any good people. They were all born in sin. That makes us, by definition, bad people. Varying degrees of bad. Some of us just do worse than others, and so there's no one good. No, not one that puts us in a really precarious place. And so what Jesus did is God sent his son Jesus to die for

the whole world, because the whole world's bad. And of course, maybe the most famous verse in all of Scripture is John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Of course, first John chapter 2, verse 2 expounds upon this because it says that and he that is Jesus himself is the propitiation, which is a big word. That means the payment that turns away God's wrath for our sins and not for ours only, but for the whole world also. Now the Bible also says that God gives to each person in Romans chapter 12, verse 3, a measure of faith to respond to what Jesus has done. And so the Romans were feeling pretty good about themselves. And Paul said, hey, don't get so excited about being you. You only are you, because God gave you a measure of faith to believe in him and to do the things he's called you to do. And when we think about the calling of God, I love how the Bible wraps up in revelation chapter 22, verse 17. Some of the closing words of the whole of Scripture says this. And the spirit and the bride say, come, and let him who hears say, come, and let him who thirsts, come. Whoever desires, let him take of the water of life freely. Whosoever will may come. Now of all that can come, God extends this invitation to everyone only, but a small number of people respond to God's call favorably. Matthew chapter 22, verse 14. Jesus said, many are called, but few are chosen, and those who do respond God gives the ability. According to John chapter 1, verses 11 and 12, Jesus said of himself, he came to his own through the pen of John. He came to his own. That is Jesus, his own people, and that he created people. And so he came as a human to humans, but to his own ethnic group, the Jews. He became a Jew to reach the Jews. And so he came to his own, but his own did not receive him. And yet as many as did receive him, he gave them. It says, the right to become the children of God. And so that is to those the Scripture tells us who believe on his name. So throughout Scripture you can see that love demands a choice. Forced love is not love. And so the spiritually dead, the Bible says, were dead in our trespasses and sins. They can't choose. So what God does is he initiates relationship to dead people. He invites dead people to respond to his call to have eternal life, to be born again. And then he gives to each of these a measure of faith so they can respond. And yet man must choose him, receive him, as the Scripture says. And so very few do. But the ones that do, those few that respond and receive Jesus are chosen. They're elected by God's foreknowledge. By the way, when we think about this idea of God's election and his predestination and man's free will, the word predestined in the Bible is never used of predestining anyone or electing them to hell. And with this example, I'd like to show you that neither was Esau elected to hell. All he was elected to was to not be the greater, as was the cultural norm. He still could have had a great life in God, but he was chosen not to be the firstborn as it pertained to receiving all the blessings and the birthrights that came along with it. So then, the way I understand

foreknowledge and predestination, it's kind of like this. If those were the pearly gates, and I'm not sure this is how it works when you get to heaven, but it has been supposed that when you read scripture, you have whosoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely on this side of things. That's the invitation. And when we get there, we'll realize it's actually chosen before Christ by Christ, before the foundation of the world. The two sides of the thing. And so still, for many people, they're like, I can't get my mind around that. It seems at odds. God's election and man's free will seem incompatible to me. And I've always kind of liked this illustration. I think the opposite is actually true of these being incompatible. I think it works like the suspension bridge, where the strength in a suspension bridge is the tension between two opposing or opposite pillars, you might say. And so if you don't have one of these pillars, the whole thing collapses. And so is true with our salvation that God's sovereignty is completely in play, but so is man's free will, and the strength is actually the tension. And I believe it's unfortunate that people have landed on one side of you'd call it an argument or another. Either you're a God's sovereignty person or a man's free will person, when historically you got to know that this argument wasn't a thing until the 15th century or the 16th century, like it didn't even exist until then, really. And so I think the strength is actually where the deck finds all of its. The tension is where the deck finds all of its strength. And in this particular conversation now, okay, take a deep breath. Okay, if that wasn't enough, let's tackle in our remaining eight minutes. Does God hate? What does it mean that it says God hated Esau? There's some different ideas on this, but let's start with the word hate. It's used two different ways in the Bible. In Luke chapter 14, verse 26, the word hate in the Greek is *missio*. It's to love less. That's the first way it's translated in the Bible. And Jesus said, if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes. And his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Well, that's obviously not I. I can't stand you hate. It's love less. And so the idea is the love of family should appear as hate in comparison to the love of God. It's priority. You guys get that from the from the context. The second way is how it's used in Malachi chapter 1 verse 3. That word in the Hebrew is *Son* and it means enemy, foe, odious hostility towards and very rarely it is also translated and then used as love less not in this case. By the way. So before we move on, I should say if you've read anything about this, people have a hard time getting their minds around God hating in the manner of enemy foe, odious hostility towards so they have decided that the hate of God towards Esau is actually directed at his offspring or Edom. I'm not in that camp, but some people do believe that to try to get their minds around this. So let me refer you one other place before we start trying to tie all this together. Psalms chapter 5 verse 5 says that God hates that sawney odious hostility towards all workers of iniquity. So please, I'll be careful with this, because

I know that some of you have been taught this and you believe this, but the Bible does not teach that God loves the sinner and hates the sin. It's not in the Bible. That's not how this works. God doesn't love the sinner and hate the sin sins. Not arbitrary. It's not capricious. It's not over here. Sin happens because people are sinners. We prove that we're a sinner because we sin. And then sin hurts people. So God does hate the sin, but he also hates the sinner in the sense that our sin puts us at enmity, or that is war with God. We walk around thinking, well, most people are just pretty good. And they, you know, maybe they're a little bit indifferent towards God. And these people may be really against God, but just because they don't believe it doesn't mean they're in a really bad spot. Look, the Bible says that if you don't know Jesus, you're at war with God. And that is not a great place to be. In fact, Romans chapter 8, verse 7 says this. The carnal mind, the mind without God is at war. Enmity against God. So then verse 8, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. The Bible goes on to say that apart from Christ, we are continually storing up the wrath of God. Ephesians chapter 5 verse 6 says, the wrath of God is is being stored up against the sons of disobedience. And if there's no intervention, then that wrath will be realized in hell. And so God's love can't let sin go unchecked. God's love actually has to stop sin. And yet, because God is just and the justifier, he's both sides of the coin. God's love then sent Jesus, who took the wrath of sinners and abolishes the enmity or the war for sinners. For all who believe. And Ephesians chapter 2, verse 15 says, Jesus made peace with God for those who believe. The wall of separation, the enmity, the war is, is put away in Christ Jesus. For those who believe. Now what about God's hate for Esau? Consider that the hate of Esau is never mentioned until after his life is over, and after his lineage is proved out who he was, his descendants replicated who Esau was. By the way, his mother, as we read the prophecy to her, was not told that God hated Esau before his birth. She was just told he wouldn't be in normal favored firstborn status. And Esau, even though he was not given that favored cultural status, was still blessed. And he became a great nation for many years. The New Testament actually illuminates something about Esau, tells us who he is and what what he did. Hebrews chapter 12. I'm going to start reading in the 14th verse down to verse 16. As you know, the Old Testament has been said to be the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed. We find out something about Esau in these passages. The writer says, pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. Looking carefully, lest anyone fall short of the grace of God, lest any bitter root springs up, causing trouble. And by this many have become defiled, lest there be key verse any fornicator that's immoral or profane, that is godly. Excuse me, ungodly person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. So he gave. He gave his birthright away, and he didn't care about it, because that he sold it for stew,



because he didn't care about the birthright was the spiritual blessing. He gave it away. He didn't care anything about the spiritual. For, you know, verse 17 says that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, the blessing was actually in those days, the stuff, the material stuff, he didn't care about the spiritual birthright. He sold it. But when his brother tricked him out of the blessing, that is the stuff he was rejected for, he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears. What you find is he never wanted to repent. He just wanted a blessing. He said to his father in tears, is there not a blessing for me, for me? Never cared one bit about the spiritual. And so he sold his birthright. He married women that his mom and dad asked him not to marry and broke their heart. And he lived for himself. And then Esau's descendants just replicated what he had done. And in fact, they persecuted Israel. Psalm 137 verse 7 says, remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, when it fell to Babylon, and the Edomites cheered, raise it, raise it, or tear it down to its very foundation. They cheered their brothers fall. Well, as we get ready to close, I have two slides. I have one in summary, and then I have a concluding slide. When I read all this, then I think the real question shouldn't be why did God hate Esau? But rather why did he love Jacob? I mean, Jacob was a trickster. He on the outside looking in didn't have any necessary great qualities. There's there's a lot of Jacob in me. So I asked the question, why does God love any of us? Why does God love Jacob? Why does God love me? And the answer is found in first John chapter 4, verse 8. I referred to it earlier. It's because God is love. God is love. And so who God is affects what he does. God does what he is. He is love. I ask the question when I look at their stories. Well, did God choose correctly based on his foreknowledge? And the answer is of course he. He always does. When you read the biblical narrative, Esau is actually what we would consider a good guy. He eventually tries to reconnect with his brother. He seems to be the more honorable one. He's kind of a he's kind of a word of his bond type of guy. And in that era, he was the guy he could hunt game. His dad loved him like he had everything that mattered culturally, but he didn't have the Lord. He was godless. And then there's Jacob. To the end of his life. He struggles with being a deceiver. He's trying to tell God how, you know, he's making deals with God. If you'll do this, I'll do that. He's he's struggled so hard with the Lord that he has to have his hip displaced. And in order to give up. This is Jacob. He was deceiver and he was full of conflict. But he followed after God, and so his name became Israel, governed by God. When I think about this, then, then here's the reality of this conversation about who God chooses and and who is not chosen. The truth is, if you want to be hated by God, just ignore his invitation and what Jesus has done for you and and you will find yourself on the receiving end of God's hate for all of eternity. But if you want to be loved by God and respond to his invitation and choose him, use the measure of

faith he's given you and he will open the eyes of your heart, and you will be loved by him. He will choose you. You choose him. He'll choose you. You reject him. He'll reject you. It's as simple as that. And so when I think about election, I think three things that election should make me less of a worrier in that man. God chose me. He gave me the ability to choose him, and he's going to see me through just like he did Jacob. Election should make me more of a worshiper. If he loves me at my worst. If he picked me and my salvation is not dependent upon me, then that is something to sing about. And finally, election should make me a wise worker in the sense that I get to ask God to show me the things that he's pre-planned for me to do before my life began. That will make my life fulfilling and fruitful, and it will also get him the most glory. I think we've been put on this earth to get the most good for the most people, and to get God the most glory. That's the story of God's elect, heavenly father. We thank you for a divine discussion, one that in so many ways may be passed completely. Our finding out. So we search into these mysteries, and by faith we accept that you are God and we are not. And we thank you for sending your son. To give us life. And so, Lord Jesus, may we be encouraged by the fact that if God loved Israel and the Jews, there's love for me and these here. And so we thank you that you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. In Jesus name, Amen. Would you guys stand?