

The Certainty of God's Love - Malachi 1:1-5

STORY - The Tumble from the Golf Cart

I. Proclamation of God's Love (1:1-2) - The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. "I have loved you," says the Lord.

- Who was Malachi? - This word is delivered by Malachi, which means "My Messenger". God has an encouraging word for a cynical and apathetic culture like the people of Israel, proclaiming an oracle (burden) of love from God himself through His prophet. Malachi is the last of the "minor prophets" before the start of the NT, and this book is God's final word to the people of Israel for 400 years before the time of John the Baptist, and then the birth of Jesus the Messiah, both predicted by the prophet Malachi. The book of Malachi is several accusations from God to a greedy and corrupt generation that has left God behind.
- Israel at the time - Israel was fighting a malaise of compromise - corrupt practices, improper sacrifices, intermarriage with foreign worshippers and other issues. They were living under Persian rule at the time, and that brought economic and cultural challenges. It was easy for the people to lose hope, while trusting their own judgement and instead of questioning the practices - far from God's Will - that got them there, they instead wondered if their God had abandoned them. What a shock, that a people that stopped looking toward God, no longer see His love and provision.
- God begins with a declaration of love: "I have loved you," which should be understood as "I have loved you, I do love you, and I will always love you". This has always been and continues to be true for all time - and as God does not change, nor will His promise.

Isaiah 54:10 - "Though the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but my lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and my covenant of peace will not be shaken"

- Israel responds with cynical doubt: "In what way have You loved us?". Instead of looking at God's demonstrated faithfulness throughout their history, they instead were consumed by their current difficult and challenging circumstances.

Exodus 16:2-3 - "But the whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The sons of Israel said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread until we were full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this entire assembly with hunger!"

rejected because he sought life free from the Lord's guidance or responsibility and that is a life of desolation!

- **Peaceful** - Understanding election provides assurance of love and security because of God's love. He has always been for His people, and understanding that God is for us, and not against us, is the road to joy and peace in relationship with God!

Psalm 144:15 - "Blessed are the people of who this is so; blessed are the people who's God is the Lord"

****From VV 12-14 -***

That means: Needs met, worries displaced, joy that triumphs over fear, and visible evidence of God's hand working in your world...!

III. Provision of God's Love: Preservation (1:4-5) - Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins", thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever." Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel".

- **The Fate of Edom** - God contrasts the fate of Edom, which was laid waste and would not be allowed to truly rebuild, serving as an example of judgment. While Edom seeks to rebuild, yet God declares He will destroy it, marking it for the "jackals of the wilderness".
- **The Future of Israel** - God promises to magnify His ongoing protection and favor. This highlights that God's sovereign choice preserving His people, unlike Edom, for God's magnificence will not limited to the borders of Israel.
- **The Result** - Israel is to see this distinction and recognize that God is sovereignly demonstrating His love beyond the shadow of any reasonable doubt, which should lead to praise—"The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel!". This will have the inescapable affect of encouragement of Israel as well as any Christian - for God is for those who place their trust in Him!
- *STORY Elizabeth Fry - in Great Britain in 1813, she entered a prison called Newgate and saw its deplorable conditions. Built for 60, it housed 300 when she visited. It was damp, unsanitary and women and children often slept on the cold concrete floor or bundles of hay. Food was not available unless provided by families. Outraged, Elizabeth visited female inmates, providing food and water, clothing, blankets, and gathered information about deplorable conditions. She didn't stop at one prison. Her observations and hard work over years eventually led to recommendations for prison reform including separation of the

sexes, classifications of criminals, adequate provision and secular as well as religious instruction for the inmates. She opened in-prison schools, taught workable skills to inmates, and taught scripture. She even sat with death row inmates, comforting them with the love of Jesus - that though their life might be ending, their eternity could still be secured with Christ's love. During her lifetime and well after, her observations and reforms, motivated by love, spread throughout Europe and the west.

So Body of Christ....whats the verdict? Does the God of heaven still love you? Do we have a right to sit around and nurse our wounds? Gods love is unassailable, and if that is so, it necessitates a response.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Malachi 1:1-5

1. The Proclamation of Love: God opens by telling his people, "I have loved you" (v. 1-2). This is a foundational, undeserved, and Sovereign affection, not based on merit.

****Is God's love an easy recall, or do you struggle some with that reality?***

2. The Doubt of the People: Israel, feeling discouraged, cynical, picked-on or indifferent, questions this, replying: "How have you loved us?" (v. 2).

****What kind of circumstances can come up that can lead to momentarily doubting God's love for you?***

3. The Evidence of Love (Jacob vs. Esau): God answers by reminding them of the distinct fates of Jacob (Israel) and Esau (Edom). While Edom is destroyed, Israel is preserved. This "differentiation" serves as proof of his special care.

****In what ways has God reminded you of His caring presence throughout your life?***

4. The Lesson on God's Character: Even when God's people are struggling, they are not destroyed, demonstrating his mercy. The ultimate goal is that they—and the world—recognize the LORD's greatness beyond any obstacles.

****In this examination of God's character, what do you find most remarkable about how He deals with us - His mercy (judgement withheld) or grace (underserved favor)?***