

# Faithful: Lessons from Malachi

6.1.25

Message 1

## Background

A. Malachi is unfamiliar to most of us.

1. He is the last of the writing prophets.
2. After Malachi, there are 500 years between him and Jesus.
3. It isn't that God didn't speak or wasn't moving during that time, but there were no messages that we recognize as Scripture.
4. There were many important events that shaped the day and times that Jesus lived in, like the development of the Pharisees and Sadducees and the Maccabean revolt that is celebrated at Hannukah.
5. But Malachi is effectively the end of the Old Testament.

B. Malachi is writing to Jews in Jerusalem.

1. They have recently been exiles in Babylon for 70 years.
2. It was during that season that men like Daniel and Jeremiah were active.
3. But now, the Jews had been set free from exile by the Persian King Cyrus the Great.
4. He allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple that had been destroyed by the Babylonians.
5. By the time Malachi is writing, Ezra and Nehemiah have helped reform the Jewish people and reestablished the Temple.

6. But within 15 years of Nehemiah, the Jewish people are showing many of the same problems that led to the Exile to begin with.

7. The priests and spiritual leaders are lazy and corrupt.

a. The people are also corrupt in their worship and unfaithful in their personal lives.

b. And, on top of all of this, they are questioning God's love, His provision, and even His worth.

C. Through all of Malachi, we see a sharp contrast.

God's faithfulness and love are contrasted with the unfaithfulness of God's people.

We will also see that when people are unfaithful to God, this unfaithfulness affects our homes, finances, and worship.

Malachi's job as prophet was to declare God's word and to enforce the Covenant.

Thus, verse 1 declares a pronouncement or oracle of Malachi.

### **Malachi 1:1–5 (CSB)**

A pronouncement:

The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.

<sup>2</sup>"I have loved you," says the LORD.

Yet you ask, "How have you loved us?"

"Wasn't Esau Jacob's brother?" This is the LORD's declaration. "Even so, I loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup>but I hated Esau. I turned his mountains into a wasteland, and gave his inheritance to the desert jackals."

<sup>4</sup>Though Edom says, "We have been devastated, but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of Armies says this: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called a wicked country and the people the LORD has cursed forever. <sup>5</sup>Your own eyes will see this, and you yourselves will say, 'The LORD is great, even beyond the borders of Israel."

## 1. How have I loved you?

A. One of the most painful human experiences is the questioning of your love.

1. When a child questions the love of good parents, that hurts.
2. When a spouse questions the love of a good spouse, there is immense pain involved.
3. When good bosses are accused of hating their employees, when good leaders are accused of not caring for their charges, there is pain and critical self-reflection.

B. Here, in Malachi, we have the very People of God, the chosen people, questioning God's love for them

1. A thousand years before, literally, God had set Israel free from the slavery of Egypt.
2. For a thousand years God had guided, provided, corrected, and directed His people.
  - a. Men like Joshua, Caleb, Samuel and David had been faithful leaders.
  - b. Through good kings and evil kings.
  - c. Through attack, exiles, famines, and plenty God had shown a specific and special love for the sons of Jacob.
3. Now, They are looking God in the face after a thousand years of faithfulness and saying, "You don't love me!"
  - a. When God says, "Of course I love you." They respond:
  - b. Show me how you have loved me?

## 2. It all begins with questioning God's love.

A. Questions are good.

1. God is not afraid of any of your questions.

2. No question has ever been asked of Christianity that has stopped its spread.

B. But this moves beyond understanding or questioning into the realm of accusation.

1. How have you loved us is an accusation.

2. It is demanding proof by the lesser to the greater, "show me how you love me!"

C. This is how it began in the Garden: Satan tempted Eve by questioning and accusing God.

1. If God loved you, He wouldn't withhold this from you.

2. If He really loved you, then your happiness would be important to Him.

D. When we feel unloved, anything becomes possible.

1. When we are unloved, all expressions and actions are on the table.

2. God, through Malachi, uses an example from their history: the relationship and election of Jacob/Israel and Esau.

Immediately, we are struck by what feels like a problem.

### 3. God hated Esau?

A. If this were only the Old Testament, we could overlook it, but Paul quotes this passage in Romans 9!

Hate is not merely emotion.

Sometimes hate refers to a decision to choose one over another.

Jesus said: Luke 14:26 (ESV)

**26 "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.**

Sometimes, 'hate' in Scripture means choosing one over the other.

Here, God decided to choose the younger brother over the older.

Paul says in Romans 9 that before either Esau or Jacob had done anything good or bad, God had chosen Jacob.

B. Esau should have been the heir of the promise, but God chose Jacob, whom he later named Israel, instead.

1. This shows that "his salvation rests on his promises alone, and not on natural descent."<sup>1</sup>
2. God chose Jacob to be the lineage of blessing, not Esau.
3. That does not mean He doomed Esau to hell, but rather that he was to be second instead of the first.
4. But, this spiraled Esau and his lineage out of control.
5. By the time of Malachi, Esau's descendants, known as Edom, had a history of violence and destruction.

C. 2 Chronicles 28 records an example of the Edomites attacking Judah along with the Assyrians.

1. Instead of being brotherly and neighborly, they took captives and murdered, raped and pillaged.
2. The descendants of Esau, called Edom, had a 1000-year history of resentment and anger toward Israel.
3. It didn't have to be this way, but it was the path they chose.
4. To say another way: God didn't MAKE Esau and his descendants angry, they chose to be angry.
5. Yes, God selected the younger brother but that did not justify what Edom did.

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<sup>1</sup> NIDNT, Volume 3 321.

D. God's outrage and judgment against Edom/Esau is the sole topic of one of the smallest books of the Bible, Obadiah.

Obadiah 10–14 (CSB)

**EDOM'S SINS AGAINST JUDAH**

<sup>10</sup>You will be covered with shame  
and destroyed forever  
because of violence done to your brother Jacob.

<sup>11</sup>On the day you stood aloof,  
on the day strangers captured his wealth,  
while foreigners entered his city gate  
and cast lots for Jerusalem,  
you were just like one of them.

<sup>12</sup>Do not gloat over your brother  
in the day of his calamity;  
do not rejoice over the people of Judah  
in the day of their destruction;  
do not boastfully mock  
in the day of distress.

<sup>13</sup>Do not enter my people's city gate  
in the day of their disaster.  
Yes, you—do not gloat over their misery  
in the day of their disaster,  
and do not appropriate their possessions  
in the day of their disaster.

<sup>14</sup>Do not stand at the crossroads

to cut off their fugitives,  
and do not hand over their survivors  
in the day of distress.

E. God "hated" Esau, meaning that God did not choose Esau as the main focus of the story.

1. Before Esau had ever done anything wrong, God had already chosen to use his younger brother as the conduit of blessing to the nations.
2. However, Esau consistently and repeatedly rejected God's love and the opportunities presented to him and his descendants.
3. His descendants chose to be enemies of God and became the objects of God's wrath.
4. By the time of Malachi, Edom had been devastated.

#### 4. A wrong kind of boldness.

A. Edom declares: "We will rebuild..."

1. But the work will be thwarted, confused, and ultimately fruitless.
2. It was so, at the Tower of Babel.
3. It was so with Edom and it is so with us.
4. Unless the Lord builds the house, he labors in vain.

B. If the Lord sets his face against you, then nothing you try will prosper.

1. And God is trying to make this point clear to His chosen people.
2. Whatever Israel touches prospers.

3. Israel, in a short time, rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem and the Temple that Babylon had destroyed.

4. They were living in safety.

5. Though they continued to act faithlessly toward God, God NEVER stopped showing them love even when they were walking in open rebellion.

C. Our success is not a sign of God's approval but God's sovereignty.

1. When God sets his face toward you, when God loves you, there is nothing like it.

a. Nothing created can separate you from the love of God.

b. No exiles, no destroyed temples, no political upheaval can separate you from the love of God.

2. For Edom, no amount of rebuilding, struggle, or attacking Israel's people could cause God to give them the blessing He promised to Israel.

## 5. Your own eyes will see this.

A. Israel stands before God questioning, "How do you love us?"

1. God says, "Your own eyes will see this."

2. You will see the distinction between God loving you and hating you.

3. You will watch your story and compare it to others, and see the faithfulness of God, and will declare God's greatness everywhere.

B. By watching God's power, righteousness, election, and love, we see that God is great not just in our own lives (our own borders) but everywhere.

1. Even when we can't see it, He's working.



2. Even when we think God has lost control, He hasn't.
3. Even when we think God is unfaithful or unfair, He isn't.
4. Even when we think God doesn't love us, He does.

C. How do we know?

1. For the Jews, God pointed to a point in time when He chose the younger son to be the conduit of blessing.
2. Through Jacob (Israel), God intended to bless the world.
3. For Christians, God points us to His Son, Jesus.
  - a. The Son that God did not spare but gave as a ransom for many.
  - b. The one given that enables all who call upon Him to be saved.
  - c. Jesus is the greatest example of love and faithfulness ever given.

D. When my eyes stray from Jesus and I start focusing on my circumstances, situation, pain, and troubles, I can begin to question God's love for me.

1. But when I gaze upon the Cross, I see the extent of God's love, and everything else falls into perspective.
2. When I look upon Jesus and see His faithfulness, even though I've been unfaithful, I'm amazed that God would love someone like me.

## Apply: What do I do with Malachi?

A. The Big question: How's your love?

1. This short book begins with God's people questioning God's love for them.
2. Questions don't bother God, and neither do moments of doubt or concern.

3. If we permit patterns of thought that consistently questions God's love, despite evidence of faithfulness to the contrary, then we will start living like we are unloved.

4. When we live like we are unloved, we will be unfaithful.

a. Love requires faithfulness.

b. Love without faithfulness is not love.

c. This is an important theme of Malachi.

B. Have you reflected upon God's faithfulness lately?

1. Unfaithfulness follows ungratefulness.

2. We don't cheat on what we are grateful for.

3. If we are genuinely grateful for what we have been given, we will not treat it unfaithfully.

4. The pattern in Malachi is:

a. Unloved->Ungrateful->Unfaithful

b. Loved-Grateful-Faithful

C. Israel thought God didn't love them because all they were going through.

1. The Exile, the struggles of rebuilding the Temple under Nehemiah, surrounded by hostile peoples.

2. All of these situations were perceived to mean that God didn't love them and, therefore, God was unfaithful.

3. But God speaks up and says you have no idea.

He then points them to the example of Edom.

If you think God hates you, then think again.

4. This morning I encourage you to not view your circumstances as proof that God hates you.

5. Instead, examine how God has been with you through it all.

D. When our love is right, it will change other areas of our life as well.

1. As we will see, Malachi deals with two of the most painful areas of our life: marriage and money.
2. For Israel, their marriages were wrecks and their finances were too.
3. But it was all because their relationship with God was wrong.
4. How can you invest in your relationship with God this week?

E. A few ideas:

1. Add 5-minutes to your prayer time.
2. Go for a prayer walk.
3. Change your spotify list to worship music.
4. Bring your Bible to the kitchen table.
5. Put God on your calendar
6. What if this summer, instead of being a time where we pull back from God because of vacation and travel, it is a time we lean in?

To be chosen from all the others is a great gift. It's a gift I hope you never overlook and always receive with gratitude. Take a moment to consider the times someone chose you. Think about your job. Of all the people who could have been hired, they chose you. Or maybe you received a special invitation to an incredible once-in-a-lifetime event. And if you are married, your spouse chose you. Reiland, Confident Leader, page 18

## Addendum

Ezekiel 25:12–14 (CSB)

### JUDGMENT AGAINST EDM

<sup>12</sup> This is what the Lord God says: Because Edom acted vengefully against the house of Judah and incurred grievous guilt by taking revenge on them,

<sup>13</sup>therefore this is what the Lord GOD says: I will stretch out my hand against Edom and cut off both people and animals from it. I will make it a wasteland; they will fall by the sword from Teman to Dedan. <sup>14</sup>I will take my vengeance on Edom through my people Israel, and they will deal with Edom according to my anger and wrath. So they will know my vengeance. This is the declaration of the Lord GOD.

Romans 9:6–13 (CSB)

<sup>6</sup>Now it is not as though the word of God has failed, because not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. <sup>7</sup>Neither is it the case that all of Abraham's children are his descendants. On the contrary, **your offspring will be traced through Isaac.** <sup>8</sup>That is, it is not the children by physical descent who are God's children, but the children of the promise are considered to be the offspring. <sup>9</sup>For this is the statement of the promise: **At this time I will come, and Sarah will have a son.** <sup>10</sup>And not only that, but Rebekah conceived children through one man, our father Isaac. <sup>11</sup>For though her sons had not been born yet or done anything good or bad, so that God's purpose according to election might stand—<sup>12</sup>not from works but from the one who calls—she was told, **The older will serve the younger.** <sup>13</sup>As it is written: **I have loved Jacob, but I have hated Esau.**