

God's Love for His People

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[0 : 00] We've been looking at the background that leads us to our study in the prophecy of Malachi.

! And we've seen a pretty pitiful state, if you would, of the nation of Israel. The covenant people of God. That we'll begin to see the culmination of God's attitude toward that in our study.

As I said before, I'm studying, of course, for the Wednesday night study in Malachi. But I've also been doing study in the book of Jeremiah for some winter Bible studies I'll be doing in various places later on.

In those studies in the book of Jeremiah, you get a real flair of what really has been going on in the nation of Israel. That paints quite a vivid picture of the reason for God's judgment in the captivities for them.

But also his love for them and bringing them back into the land after that 70 years of captivity. And so, just say that as a side statement so that if you want to sometime just glance through the book of Jeremiah, you get a further idea of what's been going on there that gives God the reason to write through Malachi to his people.

[1 : 39] Remember, this is the last word from God for 400 years. So, it's a very vital piece of information that it gives to them.

So, we turn to the book of Malachi, chapter 1. I'm going to read out of the King James Version. I'm one of those that believe if it was good enough for the Apostle Paul, it's good enough for me. Even Jesus used for King James Version.

Yeah, there you go. There you go. I don't know how many. I've got at least three of the old Schofield reference Bibles that I've been so accustomed to using.

And everything else seems like it's strange to me. But, nonetheless, you can read what you've got. You can put it all together and come up with a good idea of what's going on.

[2 : 38] So, let's begin in chapter 1, verse 1. Let's read the first five verses to begin with. The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet you say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother, saith the Lord? Yet I loved Jacob.

And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains, and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, we are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places.

Thus saith the Lord of hosts. They shall build, but I will throw down. And they shall call them the border of wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord hath indignation forever.

And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The Lord will be magnified from the border of Israel." We've already made a statement that the theme, seemingly, of the book of Malachi was found in chapter 3, verse 6.

[3 : 44] We mentioned that at the beginning of the introduction. And that's where God says, I am the Lord, I am Jehovah, I change not. Therefore, you, house of Jacob, are not consumed.

But today, we begin to see the basis, really, or the foundation of the entire prophecy of Malachi, as it's contained in the first four verses of the first chapter.

And that is the love of God for his people. Realize again, everything God does, he does from the backdrop of his love for his people.

Everything he does, even in the judgments that he gives to the people of Israel, it's all from the backdrop of his love for them. That's why he starts the chapter as he does, or starts the prophecy. So, it's the love of God that he's shown his people throughout the generations, that really ought to be the motivation for what they do, and the pattern for their conduct when it comes to their life and their relationship to God.

[4 : 57] Isn't that the way it should be for all of us? To recognize and remember and acknowledge the fact God loves us. He loves us with an everlasting love. And that should be the backdrop of our living and our life, is the fact that we go through every day recognizing God loves us.

What a way, what a way to wake up in the morning, amen? With just a fresh realization that God loves me. Yeah, he loves me in spite of myself. He still loves me.

And so, I can conduct my life with that background and backdrop for the day today. So, notice if you will, in verse 1, the prophecy begins by identifying the message through Malachi as the burden of the Lord.

Now, we can all relate to what a burden is. Something that kind of weights us down. A difficulty of some type that is uncomfortable. That weighs us down and we just don't like to have that hanging over our head.

So, that's kind of the way it is here. The burden of the Lord. But it goes a little bit further, if you will. It has a threatening tone to it, as far as God's relationship and message to the nation of Israel.

[6 : 21] The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. They tell us that in literature, the word burden is never used in the title of a message or the title of a book, a paper, whatever, unless it has something dire and something grave within it.

And that's the case here. It's not the best way to open a letter and see that word that this is going to be a burden that we're going to hear about.

And it's the burden of God that he's given to us here. But it's not the burden of Malachi. It's the burden of the Lord. Notice the spelling of the word Lord.

It's the word Jehovah, of course. He is the self-existent one that reveals himself to man. That's Jehovah. So, we get the idea here that God now is once again going to reveal himself or something about himself to the people of Israel.

His covenant nation. Now, again, it's the burden of Jehovah to Israel. Not against Israel, but to Israel.

[7 : 42] Two different ideas here. When you write a letter, I'm writing a letter to someone. Gives us the idea that there's fellowship there between us.

Alright? There's a relationship. But if I'm going to write something against somebody, I'm writing a letter against you. That has a threatening tone to it, if you will.

And that's more of an idea that the one I'm writing to is at enmity with me. So, that's the picture here. God's got some dire things against the nation of Israel.

And he's going to lay out his case before them. And they're going to begin to see, once again, what it is he's talking about. It's interesting. Well, I don't want to get a hold of myself here. It's going to be interesting to see some things and some reactions that they've had toward all of this as God brings that against them.

So, it's the burden of the Lord to the nation of Israel. One that has friendship and relationship with God.

[8 : 49] Then again, now, in verse number 2, he opens the declaration by saying, I have loved you, saith Jehovah.

Again, reveals that he is the God of love. Now, when did he reveal him? When did he love them? Well, we'll see that here in just a moment.

He is the God of love. Now, that word love there, I have loved you, is love in its expression or its manifestation is the idea here. It's not the character, per se, of the love.

It's the manner of the love. I have manifested my love to you. I have revealed that to you. I've expressed that to you.

And so, it's the equivalent in the English of our idea of to love somebody. So, it has a strong, a sense of strong emotional attachment with a desire to either possess or be in the presence of the one that we love.

[9 : 56] So, realize it speaks here of a personal relationship. How many of you remember, mostly the women, when you started falling in love with your spouse, with your husband?

And you've been dating, you've been dating with them. How many of you ladies had the occasion to write letters? You were maybe a distance apart and you wrote letters to your sweetie?

Yeah, but he didn't write back. Well, that's... I wrote one card from the FBI Academy in 16 weeks. Did you? One postcard. Yeah, yeah.

It's like the story, I think I've told you before, I'm sure I have, but the elderly couple, the old couple that finally went to the marriage counselor because they are having problems. And the counselor looks at the woman and says, well, what's the problem here?

And she says, we've been married for 75 years and he just doesn't tell me he loves me anymore. And the counselor looks at the guy, he says, what do you think about that?

[11:07] And he looks at her and says, Hazel, when we got married, I told you I loved you. And if I'd have changed my mind, I'd have told you. So that's just kind of the way men think, right?

Yeah, yeah, yeah. You're going to remember that one, right, Tom? Right, Tom? I might have gotten Tom in trouble there.

Yeah. He doesn't care. But here, God said, I have loved you. It's the idea of a personal relationship that he has initiated with his covenant people.

I mean, after all, he's made a covenant with them. And in making that covenant, he has loved them through that and in doing that. And so I have loved you. When has he loved you?

And since when? In all eternity. In all their past, God's loved them. Now, same way with us. Amen. Has there ever been a time when God didn't love us?

[12:08] For God so loved the world that he gave his son. Now, we have to recognize something. Can you, can you, you don't need to verbalize this, but can you in your heart and mind think of and recognize some of the ways that God manifested and has manifested his love to you?

Diane, it could have been, more likely was, when he gave Tom to be your husband. He manifested his love to you.

Maybe. Even though he hasn't written letters back to you. Tom, here's a, here's a, here's a, here's a, an assignment for you.

This week, sometime this week, write a sweet letter to your wife. And don't just hand it to her. Put a stamp on it. Put, put, put a 50 cent stamp on it and mail it to her.

So she gets it in the mail. Okay. All right. All right. All right. But we've got to recognize, we've got to consider and acknowledge the many ways that God manifests his love to us in our lives.

[13:40] And keep that, that perspective fresh within our memory so that we can recognize that his love for us are the basis for his dealings to us and with us, if you will.

Now, sometimes those dealings are very nice, very gracious. And sometimes they're grievous, they're harsh. And that's necessary for us at times.

But nonetheless, there are ways that God deals with us in our lives. They're an outflowing of that everlasting love that he has for us.

Go to Hebrews chapter 12. And remember, remember what the writer says here. Hebrews chapter 12.

Hebrews chapter 12. Verse 13. Verse 13. Verse 13.

[14:41] Verse 13. Verse 13. Verse 13. Verse 13.

The exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons. For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?

But if you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence. Shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

[15:48] Now, no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

So, as a result, lift up holy hands, which hang down. That's the idea of returning back to prayer. And the feeble knees. Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed.

God, at times, deals with us harshly, but we recognize that there's a reason for that. It's necessary for us.

How many of us, don't raise your hand here, how many of us, when we have those grievous times, don't right away recognize it may be from the Lord and we kind of, under our breath, mumble and

complain.

God, we just don't, it just ought not to be this way. We don't deserve this. Instead of saying, all right, Lord, is there something here that I need to see?

[16:53] Is there something in my life I need to see that has brought this to be part of your will for my life? If so, show me what it is so I can rectify what that is.

Always realizing God's doing that because He loves us. How many of you ever spanked your children? Why did you spank them?

They were disobedient. They were disobedient. And you're trying to teach them character, right?

Now, let me ask you this question. How many of you ever spanked your grandchildren?

Well, some of you have. Okay. A little warning, Pat. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Isn't it amazing how that changes?

I just had to ask that question. Gets their attention. Yeah. All right. The question that results from God's statement, I have loved you, saith the Lord.

[18:05] Response, wherein hast thou loved us? Where have you shown us your love? Now, it doesn't necessarily mean that was the express attitude or the expression of the people of God.

Malachi just words it that way as a reflection of the true attitude of the people of Israel here. As if to say, you in your minds are saying, you know, wherein is it that you have loved us?

Now, such ingratitude to the people of God that is expressed through Malachi's wording there.

Where have you loved us? Where have you, what have you done to express that love for us?

One of the worst, one of the, I guess, the easiest path to disobedience is forgetfulness. All right.

Forgetting what God has done for us in the past.

That's the starting point, if you will, of departing from God. It produces that heart of unthankfulness or that unthankful heart. Remember what Romans chapter 1, you know, speaks of.

[19:14] And that is that they, when they knew God, the idea there, I think, may be when they saw the character, not just the reality of God existing, but some of the character of that and possibly even the fact that God loves them.

They turned away from that. Romans 1 and verses 18 through 23. In Psalm 78, turn there with me, though. Let's look at Psalm 78 and realize something here. Psalm 78.

Verse 1. Give ear, O my people, to my law, and incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable.

I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, the praises of Jehovah, notice, and His strength and His wonderful works that He hath done.

For He established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.

[20:46] And He might not be, as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle. They kept not the covenant of God and refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them.

Marvelous things did He in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. Boy, one of the best things people can do to their children, and I think grandchildren, more so maybe, is to continually let them know what God has done in their lives.

Never forget, oh, this has been years ago when I was in North Carolina. Every year we'd have, or most every year, we would have a family visit from the mission field in Haiti.

And never forget one of the stories he told, and one of the messages he preached. They had a young daughter that was on the field with them.

[22:01] Of course, Haiti was a very dark place, still is, spiritually. They were riding in a car, and going somewhere, I guess back home from someplace, and the daughter had not yet professed faith in Christ, and at that time she wanted to, so she did.

And they asked her the question, she says, what is it that influenced you to want to place your faith in Christ? I mean, realize with me here, folks, they endured some real persecution there from the

witch doctors and everything else of the region.

And the daughter knew that. She was part of that. What influenced you? And here's what she said. It's from what I saw in you and mom.

How faithful you were to God, and the things that God did in your life to protect you and to do things through you.

That caused me to want to know Christ. So as you see, folks, it's imperative that we let our kids and our grandkids know, here's what God has done.

[23 : 14] Here's what God is doing. So that when you come to the fork in the road in your lives together, that you don't have the solution to, you don't have the reason why in your mind, you can just say, well, let's just trust God with it.

Because we look back, and we've seen that He's always been faithful. that there's never been a time in our lives when God has not been faithful. You know, it's the simple things.

As I think of that, I think of one of the early times in my life when that just really struck a chord with me.

And mercy me, Tom. This was a long time ago. It was in early 70s. We had, my wife, my first wife and I had just gotten married.

And we were, we had gotten, well, we've been married a while now because this is out of North Carolina. We transferred from Louisiana. I was in the Air Force, transferred from Louisiana to North Carolina.

[24 : 32] And back in those days, we were just young, young married kids, didn't have better sense. Whereas back then, you could do things without having better sense.

You didn't get in quite as much trouble. But we, you know, we went on and we traveled there. And the only thing we could do, we had no place to go, no place to move into.

We had all our belongings in a U-Haul trailer on the back of the car. And, and so we just pulled up to the motel and rented the motel room. And, boy, the question came to me, all right, Lord, how are we going to, how are we going to do this?

You know, how are we going to find a place to live? And this and that. And, and, you know, so, you know, God just, we just trusted you to just provide for that.

And you know what happened? The next day, my wife was reading the local newspaper. And there was a little wanted in the classified section. And in that wanted, it was a, it was a young widow, not a young widow, an older widow lady, whose daughter had gotten married, moved out, and had spare bedrooms, and was just looking for someone to come and, and live with her.

[25 : 55] She preferred just a, another elderly lady. So we, we called. And, you know, she said, well, I'm really looking just for someone like a, some of my own age, a woman, another woman, just to, to have companionship with here.

And, but she said, come on by. And then my wife was pregnant with our first daughter. Yeah. At the time, which probably helped. So we drove up there.

I mean, she explained that. My wife explained it when she talked to her. I was at work when she talked to her. And so we went over there and met the lady, Mrs. Ferguson, never forget her name, Mrs. Ferguson.

And, uh, uh, sweet lady. And, uh, I think she took one look at my wife. And just, okay, that's good. You know, we can, we can do that.

She, she let us rent that room from her, her bedroom and had, you know, the kitchen to use and all of this. And, and so God provided that for us until we found a, a regular place to rent and to live.

[27 : 00] So God provided, never forget that. And, uh, when, when he did that, my mind thought, all right, God, you are genuine. You really are. And I can trust you with everything else.

And you know, the funny thing about it is he's been faithful ever since. Yeah. Yeah. Even before that. Yes, indeed. Yeah. Yeah. Very much so. So, uh, God's working within us.

Uh, we should never forget the works of God, uh, uh, that he's, that he's, uh, done for us and continues to do.

Now, God's love toward Israel now is proven in verse two and three, and the attitudes toward Israel and toward Edom, which is of course the descendants of Esau.

Again, remember Genesis 25, Jacob and Esau were the, were the two boys that came out of the womb of the mother. Uh, remember that. Remember that when they were in the mother's womb, they were struggling, fighting with one another, literally.

[28 : 06] Uh, I mean, the idea there was almost going to fisticuffs in the mother's womb. And, and that was always a bad omen for a mother in those days. If the children were, were being restless in the mother's womb, it was a bad omen.

So she goes to the Lord and says, what is this that's going on with me? I, it's better off for me. If I just die. Then for this to happen. And God expressed to her, remember that two nations are in your womb.

All right. You've got two different nations with the idea here, two different personalities, two character, two different characteristics. And the idea then was, was that it's going to be, it's going to be different than the tradition.

When these boys are born, eventually the older will serve the younger. So you get there. Of course, the picture then that Jacob, the second born was the preference of God over the first born Esau. So that's the picture that, that Malachi paints here. was not Esau, Jacob's brother, saith the Lord. Yet I have loved Jacob and I had hated Esau and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.

[29 : 29] So, you know, where have you loved us? Where have you expressed that love to us? Well, what about Jacob and Esau? What about that? You're the descendants of Jacob.

All right. What have I done there? I've chosen Jacob and hated Esau. Now, I don't remember if I put this in your notes or not, but of course there's been, there's always been a controversy with that statement.

But how could God of love hate Esau? Well, whether I put those in there or not, I may have about the word hated. Strong sense of the word typifies the emotional jealousy.

Therefore, the feeling of Joseph's brothers, an example, because they, you know, dad preferred him over them. So there was jealousy there. So that's a strong sense of the word hated there in Genesis 36.

7.4. In the weaker sense, hatred signifies being set against something. In Exodus 18.21, Jethro advised Moses to select men who hated or were set against covetous, covetousness to be secondary judges over Israel.

[30 : 49] A very frequent but special use of the verb means to be unloved. For example, hated may indicate that someone is untrustworthy, therefore an enemy to be ejected from one's territory.

So when you look at the idea of Jacob and Esau, and this more so dealing with their posterity, all right, that you would think it would be the opposite way around, that God would treat Esau better than Jacob, but that's not the way it was.

Remember, even before they were born, God said it would be different. Now, it was Jacob, or Esau rather, Edom, his seed, that would be the inferior that was going to serve his brother.

Now, so, accordingly, Jacob became the heir of the promise, and Esau lost the blessing, if you will, of the firstborn.

Now, God's love for Jacob was so great, that in comparison, his actions toward Esau looked like hatred. So, you know, take that for what it is.

[31 : 56] If he hated him, he hated him. He's sovereign, right? Yeah, yeah, yeah. But, of course, again, the character of the two boys, was very different.

Though Jacob was a supplanter, Esau just outright, had no use for the spiritual heritage. That was his as the firstborn. So, you know, put that into the place there.

But the picture there, more so, is not about that, but about the idea that God did that, as a manifestation of his love for them. So, likewise, it's imperative that we apprehend, get a hold of, the love that God has for us.

Remember, what John said in his first epistle, in 1 John 3, 1, Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.

Therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Remember the word manner there, is it means, it's literally the idea of what country, or of what tribe.

[33 : 06] It denotes the idea that it is an alien type of love, that God has for us. What alien type of love? Alien to the natural man within us.

It's the love that God is, that's totally foreign, to the natural man, that we have within us. Ephesians chapter 3, verses 14 through 19, Paul has a great desire here.

And I think it's God's desire for us as well. I'm going to, I'm going to read this out of the amplified version for you.

Now, for this reason, seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ, I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

May he grant you out of the rich treasury of his glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the Holy Spirit himself dwelling in your, dwelling your inmost being, innermost being and personality.

[34 : 25] May Christ through your faith actually dwell. That's just settle down, abide, make us permanent home in your hearts. May you be grounded or rooted deep in love and founded securely on love that you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of it.

That's the love of God. That you may really come to know practically through experience for yourselves, the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge without experience, that you may be filled through all your being unto all the fullness of God.

May have that, that is may have the richest measure of the divine presence and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God himself. I want you to pick up on that little phrase there, that you may, that you may experience for yourselves the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge without experience.

All right? I think, I don't think there's anything wrong with us going to the Lord and say, God, I really would like to experience afresh your love for me today.

And it's not just for the idea of knowing that God loves us. But you realize the more we understand about how God loves us and what the character and quality of that love is, the more we fall in love with him.

[36 : 10] Because with the more, because that reveals to us more of who he is. And the more we recognize who he is, the more we, the more we just become overwhelmed with the idea that he has put us in relationship with himself.

For us to come to know who he is. By the expression of his love for us. So, so, well, this is Wednesday, right?

Yeah. That means you got seven more days until next Wednesday. Is that right? Tom, I'm going to give you an extension. You can take that seven days to write your letter to your wife.

I had to count, but you're right. Yeah. The next seven days, make it a point. Make it a point. Go through your days looking to see what God does to manifest his love for you.

What does he do? Write it down. Write it down. And bring that with you tomorrow. Or next, no, not tomorrow. Seven days. Seven days. Seven days from now.

[37 : 23] Thank you, Tom. Yeah, seven days from now. And let's see what God's done. Amen? To manifest his love, to show us what he is. And if you can, and if you think of that, think to do it, as you see those things he does, then look closely at that and see what God showed you about himself in those expressions of his love.

Okay? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Try to give you a crude example here.

My first, I hate, I'm not comparing. Please don't, please don't think I'm comparing my first wife to Calvita. I'm not doing that. But, but, my first wife was a good cook.

Calvita is too. You can tell. But my first wife was a bread maker. Ooh. Homemade yeast rolls.

Cooking in the oven. Yeah. You know, never forget, after we got married, our, and had a quick weekend honeymoon, we packed up our, all of our belongings, as I said, in a U-Haul trailer, headed for Las Vegas, Nevada.

[38 : 57] My first duty station out of tech school. No? Angels Peak, radar station. Yeah. On the way there, my grandmother, on my mother's side, lived in Kingman, Arizona.

Way out in the boonies. She was one of those that got in on this land development deal. You know, where they cut some big wide roads in the middle of the desert and started building some little two bedroom houses, wood frame houses.

So she bought one of those with the idea that's going to get worth some money at some point. But anyway, so, so we, we let her know we're coming through.

She just said, oh, spend the night with me. Okay, we did. My grandmother had to go to work and she was back later that evening.

So, my wife wanted to cook dinner. And the only way we could cook dinner was out on a, on a campfire outside. Yeah.

[40 : 06] so, we started a little fire out there around some rocks and, and, she cooked the first meal. She just, she just couldn't wait to cook that first meal for her new husband.

Yeah. I don't even remember what it was, Tom. I just know I ate it because it was good. Maybe fried rattlesnake or something. I don't know.

No, no, no. But it was good. So, you know, I knew that was a true expression of her love because she just really wanted to do that. And so, she did.

But what did I learn about that from her? I learned she's a good cook. Yeah, I knew that already but I thought, no, you know, if she can do this out of this on a campfire, she's a really good cook.

So, you see, the expressions of love show us something about the nature and character and abilities of the person that expresses that love.

[41 : 10] So, God's the same way. So, so, so look for that when you see those expressions of God's love. What is it God's showing me about himself here? And, uh, see what you come up with.

All right. Well, that's a good place for us to, yeah, unhook here. All right. We'll pick up in verse number four. In seven days after Diane reads to us the letter that Tom writes to her.

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.