

God Are You Really There? - Part 2

Sunday, June 25, 2023
10:30 AM

Malachi 1:1 (NLT)

1 This is the message that the Lord gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi.

The Name Malachi means "My Messenger"

The book contains 6 Messages from God to the People

1. I have loved you and continue to love you
2. Israel's priests and people have dishonored me and broken my covenant laws
3. I do not accept your offerings
4. Judgement is coming
5. Repent and Return to The Lord
6. You have said terrible things against me but I have a scroll of remembrance for those who fear me

The people responded to each declaration of God with rhetorical questions (questions whose answers are so obvious that they need not be answered verbally) but which showed their attitude towards God. They meet each message with questions of unbelief that God would say such things. The people couldn't conceive that what God was saying about them was true. "How?," they cry out. "In What Ways have we done these things?" they declare. "Why won't you accept our offerings?" "What have we done wrong?" "How have we dishonored you?" "What have we said against you?" "What have we gained by obeying your commands?"

The events of the book of Malachi take place about 100 years after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from exile. During that time there had been periods of great revival and renewal. The Temple and city was rebuilt. The sacrifices restored. The walls were restored. But *the people had become discouraged because the glorious events spoken of by previous prophets had not yet occurred. (e.g. the Lord had not yet come to his temple; their enemies had not been removed; God's people had not been honored among the nations). They expected these things to happen right away. Because it had been longer than they expected, they became spiritually careless and turned back to their ungodly behavior. Spiritual laziness and dullness had filed the hearts and attitudes of the priests and the people. Few took God's laws seriously. The people had become unbelieving and distrustful toward God. They doubted his love and his promises and they questioned his justice. They believed there was nothing to be gained by obeying his commands. As their faith weakened, their worship became routine, lacking true respect (fear) and love for God*

So how did they get to the point that they questioned God's love, care and even existence? How do we?

Losing Our Way

1. Lose our Passion for God
2. Lose our Devotion to God
3. Lose our Dependence on God
4. Lose our Confidence in God
5. Lose our Belief in God

God's message through Malachi is relevant to our generation as well.

"Don't give up. Don't grow cold and complacent. I am still here. I am still carrying out my plan." "My Son is coming back. All my promises will be fulfilled. But will you be ready?"

Before we get into today's message, I want to back up for just a moment and talk about one of the main catalysts that lead us down a pathway in which we begin to lose our Passion for God, lose our Devotion to God, lose our Dependence on God, Lose our Confidence in God, and eventually lose our Belief in God.

Negative circumstances that come against us which cause us to begin to question God's love for us, especially when those circumstances are met with seemingly unanswered prayers.

That's why, I believe God's first and most profound message through the Prophet Malachi is the foundational truth - "I have always loved you"

Malachi 1:1-5 (NLT)

1 This is the message that the Lord gave to Israel through the prophet Malachi.

2 "I have always loved you," says the Lord.

But you retort, "Really? How have you loved us?"

And the Lord replies, "This is how I showed my love for you: I loved your ancestor Jacob, 3 but I rejected his brother, Esau, and devastated his hill country. I turned Esau's inheritance into a desert for jackals."

4 Esau's descendants in Edom may say, "We have been shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins."

But the Lord of Heaven's Armies replies, "They may try to rebuild, but I will demolish them again. Their country will be known as 'The Land of Wickedness,' and their people will be called 'The People with Whom the Lord Is Forever Angry.' 5 When you see the destruction for yourselves, you will say, 'Truly, the Lord's greatness reaches far beyond Israel's borders!'"

God knows their hearts have been wounded by the harshness of the circumstances of a sin filled world and the lies of the enemy that these circumstances prove that God is not there or at the very least he doesn't care.

It's the same lie that the enemy wanted Job to believe about god, when he spoke through the word of his wife and said

Job 2:9 (NLT)

9 His wife said to him, "Are you still trying to maintain your integrity? Curse God and die."

So God declares His undying love and is immediately met with their Response

"Really? How have you loved us?"

We can't pretend to know the circumstances that prefaced their response to God. We can only guess that in some way their lives had been challenged, they believed God had let them down, that His promises had not been fulfilled, that their prayers had not been answered, that he had abandoned them because he either didn't love them or he wasn't really there.

To those who are doubting God's love, to those who have started down a road in which they are losing their passion, their devotion, their dependence, their confidence, and even their belief in God...

God wants you to hear His message. He needs you to listen to His voice... He is shouting out to you today... "I have always loved you... I Still love you... In fact, I want you to know how I have loved you."

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- Note that both Jacob and Esau were scoundrels
- Both were unworthy of God's love. (Notice how he used the name Jacob not Israel)
- The difference between Esau and Jacob was their response to God.
- God doesn't take time to retell the story of Jacob, because they would have known it well. The Israelites bore his name (His changed name - Prince of God) But remember that his name was changed because of his encounters with God and his response to those encounters
 - Jacob met God at Bethel as he ran from his brother and responded.

Genesis 28:16-22 (NLT)

16 Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I wasn't even aware of it!" 17 But he was also afraid and said, "What an awesome place this is! It is none other than the house of God, the very gateway to heaven!"

18 The next morning Jacob got up very early. He took the stone he had rested his head against, and he set it upright as a memorial pillar. Then he poured olive oil over it. 19 He named that place Bethel (which means "house of God"), although it was previously called Luz.

20 Then Jacob made this vow: "If God will indeed be with me and protect me on this journey, and if he will provide me with food and clothing, 21 and if I return safely to my father's home, then the Lord will certainly be my God. 22 And this memorial pillar I have set up will become a place for worshiping God, and I will present to God a tenth of everything he gives me."

- Jacob acknowledged that God was there and then responded with a desire for more of God and His blessings. (Whereas Esau only wanted the blessings of man)

- Jacob met God at Paddan-Aram and responded by surrendering to His dreams, leadings and instructions. (But not once do we hear that Esau cried out to God for direction. He built his own life based upon his own decisions. It started early as he married Canaanite women who didn't believe in His God and later went to Ishmael for a wife.)
- Jacob met God at Peniel (face of God) Where God wrestled with him and his life (and name) was changed. Jacob responded by accepting that change and walking it out for the rest of his life. (But God tells us in Malachi that Esau, though confronted with God's devastation of his land and inheritance, refused to change and only became more adamant that he would rebuild on the same wicked principles)
- Jacob again met God at Shechem when God told him to move to Bethel (The house of God) Jacob responded by telling all of his people to get rid of any idols they had, purify themselves and put on clean clothes because they were going to serve God alone
- Esau never made such responses to God. God rejected Esau because of his sinful choices which brought destruction (It reminds me of Jesus parable of the Wise and Foolish man)

Matthew 7:24-27 (NLT)

24 "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash."

- God shows them how he has loved them and how they can be recipients of his Love. To continue to believe in and respond to his love, presence and activity in our lives. Even when we can't see it.
- God ends this message by declaring *"Truly, the Lord's greatness reaches far beyond Israel's borders!"* In other words, you can always see what I am doing and how I am doing it. My love and justice go far beyond the surroundings of your life. I am faithful. I am loving. I am just.

Ephesians 3:18-19 (NLT)

18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

- It reminds me of another of Jesus' Parables - The Parable of the Prodigal Son. It was the love of the father that brought the young back to his senses, it was the love of the Father that welcomed him home, it was the love of the father that restored him to his position of sonship.
- Maybe today you are asking... God are you really there? How have you loved me? Hear God's gentle and loving voice say... "I Have Always Loved You"

Dusty Road - Michael Ketterer

[Verse]

*And I've been gone
For a long time now
A wanderer
On this dusty road
And I'm crying out
I'm crying out for You, God
To come to me
And lead me home*

[Pre-Chorus]

*I'm ready now
I've changed my heart
I'm running into
Into Your arms*

[Chorus]

*And You meet me Father
On this dusty road
And You come with a ring
And You come with a robe
And You meet me Father
On this dusty road
And You wipe away my tears*

*And You lead me home
(Repeat)*

[Bridge]

*And I believe, oh I believe
That You love me, God
That You want me, God
And I believe, oh I believe
That You love me, God
That You want me, God
(Repeat)*

[Bridge]

*And I believe, oh I believe
That You love me, God
That You want me, God*

[Outro]

*That You love me, God
That You want me, God
That You love me, God
That You want me, God*