

## **Malachi 1**

### **Rekindling the Fire of Faith**

**Thesis:** Just as Israel's attitude toward God often times determined their relational health with God, so the health of our relationship with God is often times determined by our attitude toward Him.

**Illustration:** A man named Victor Frankl, a Jewish psychologist, discovered this great truth in the midst of a Jewish concentration camp during WW II. While seeking to survive the horror of this imprisonment Frankl began observing his fellow prisoners in the hope of discovering what coping mechanism would help him endure this horrendous existence. What Frankl discovered was this...

Those individuals who could not accept what was happening to them, who could not make their present suffering fit with their faith, who could not find its meaning in their world view... they despaired, lost hope, and eventually gave up and died. But those individuals that could find a meaning from their faith, were then able to find hope for a future beyond their present suffering, and so could accept what they were enduring as a part of their existence, and they survived and thrived.

***What would keep you going if you were in a situation like this? For how long?***

Israel couldn't fit their present suffering with their faith. They felt like they had waited long enough, served long enough, and made enough sacrifices. They believed God had the problem not them. God had moved. Yet, it wasn't time for the Messiah who they thought would come in and sweep them off their feet. They in fact had moved, given up, lost hope, and became bitter and dry in their relationship toward God.

#### **Background –**

- Returned to Israel from Babylonian rule to find themselves under Persian rule.
- Harvests were not good, locusts were a problem (3:1).
- Foreign cultures had made inroads, Jews married with Gentiles, divorce was common.

#### **vv 1-5 God's compassion for Israel – His Greatness**

- v. 1
  - o Malachi – my messenger
  - o Word = a threatening message that lays heavy on the heart of God.
  - o Yahweh – covenant God
- vv. 2-3
  - o Yahweh promised blessing, but Israel struggled under Gentile (Persian) oppression.
  - o I have (perfect) loved you → How?
  - o People had become skeptical. They returned from exile, expecting the return of the Messiah. They rebuilt the temple expecting the Messiah. Persia was still unbroken.
  - o 2b-3 (not heaven vs. hell)
    - “Modern studies of covenant language have shown that the word 'love' (. . . 'ahab, or any of its forms) is a technical term in both the

biblical and ancient Near Eastern treaty and covenant texts to speak of choice or election to covenant relationship, especially in the so-called suzerainty documents.” (Merrill, 391).

- Hated Esau (chose not to bless) - Mountains of Seir (Esau’s inheritance) became a desolate wasteland. Esau’s inheritance went to the desert jackals.
- Loved Jacob (chose to bless) - Jacob got the land of milk and honey
- One may love many women, but only choose to enter into a covenantal love with one woman (his wife). This special love may make it look like he hates the others.
- Someone said to some famous Christian leader (Gaebelein), “I have a serious problem with Malachi 1:3, where God says, ‘Esau I have hated.’” He replied, “I have a greater problem with Malachi 1:2, where God says, ‘Jacob, I have loved’” (Wiersbe, 479).
  - Normally the eldest son would have been blessed, but God’s economy operates differently.
  - Bottom line – God chose to bless Jacob in a way that he didn’t choose Esau.
- vv. 4-5
  - Edomites, Esau’s descendents, tried to rebuild their nation after the Babylonians destroyed it, but Yahweh wouldn’t allow it. Edom was not the land of blessing.
  - Watching Yahweh deal with Edom should have reminded Israel of His love for them and how His sovereignty extended beyond the nation of Israel.
  - They saw their present pitiful situation as proof that God didn’t love them.

*Have you experienced a time when it felt like God had moved only to look back later and see that it was actually you?*

*Have you ever experienced a time when you wanted God to bless you, but you had to wait? Or it never happened? How did you feel?*

vv. 6-14 God’s first complaint about the priests (cheating God) – **His holiness**

- vv. 6-9

- Priests were supposed to teach the Law, mediate between Yahweh and His people, and to judge the nation. Yet, they were showing contempt for God.
- How have we defiled you?
- They offered blind, crippled, and diseased animals for sacrifice even though they wouldn’t offer them to the governor.
  - Persian officials, which they didn’t like vs. Yahweh which they supposedly loved.
  - Foolish to pray that God would bless them, when they defiled Him.

*What do we offer to God that is second rate? How do we rationalize this?*

- v. 10 (Command)
  - o Lord wanted them to close shop b/c they had no regard for Him.
- vv. 11-14 (Worship profaning His name)
  - o Bait & Switch – vowed to bring an acceptable animal but in the end, they brought one that was lame, crippled, or blind. *Priests were not satisfied with God.*
    - Piper - “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him” (*Nations*, 26). When we acknowledge how blessed we are, we glorify God.
  - o (vv. 11-14) People will one day honor His name all around the world in the Millennium.
    - Piper - “Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't. Worship is ultimate, not missions, because God is ultimate, not man. When this age is over, and the countless millions of the redeemed fall on their faces before the throne of God, missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever” (*Nations*, 11).

***What kinds of things affect our heart towards God?***

***How can we be better worshipers?***