

How have you loved us? (Malachi 1:1-14 & Romans 12:1-2) 21-Oct-18 <sup>1</sup>

G'day church family

This morning we're starting a new series on the OT book of Malachi (last book of OT)

So it would be good to have your Bibles turned to Malachi chapter 1

There's the usual sermon outline, in your bulletin, if you'd like to jot down notes.

Let me pray for God's help and understanding. Let's pray...

## INTRO/CONTEXT (Malachi 1:1)

So first up then

Let's put the book of Malachi in context

### [PowerPoint 1-Heading]

- [PowerPoint 1a] - 586 BC - The Southern Kingdom of Israel was exiled to Babylon - for continual disobedience to God
- [PowerPoint 1b] The prophet Jeremiah prophesied that they would be exiled for 70 years (Jeremiah 29:10)
- [PowerPoint 1c] In exile - the Jews have no temple, no sacrifices and no proper worship of God
- [PowerPoint 1d] 539 BC - King Cyrus II [of Persia] - decrees the Jews can return to Israel
- [PowerPoint 1e] In 516BC (the 70 years are up) - some exiles return and the temple is rebuilt - under the ministries of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah
- [PowerPoint 1f] 458BC - more exiles return - under ministry of Ezra and He reestablishes teaching of God's word

- [PowerPoint 1g] 444BC - a third group of exiles return - under Nehemiah  
- rebuild walls of Jerusalem - to protect city

[PowerPoint 2-heading - Malachi]

[PowerPoint 2a] At the same time as Ezra and Nehemiah - the prophet Malachi comes along to attack the spiritual and moral decay of the priests and the people

[PowerPoint 2b] Malachi's name in Hebrew means - "my messenger" -

[PowerPoint 2c] Malachi's teaching style is unique - He makes a claim - then raises potential objections or points of views to these claims- and then knocks down these objections/points of view

For example in our passage today

- V1 - the claim - "I have loved you" says the Lord
- V2 - the objection - "But you (the Jews) ask - "How have I loved you?"
- V3 - Malachi knocks down the objection - V3 - "I have loved Jacob (the Jews founder) but Esau I have hated"

This style of teaching became very popular from Malachi's time onwards - and this same style is even used by the Apostle Paul later on in the NT

So picking up from v1 of Malachi 1

[A prophecy: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.](#)

[PowerPoint 2d] - Prophecy here literally means a **burden or heavy**

God's word is always a burden to us - because His word comes loaded with a weight of responsibility to listen carefully to it - and to act on it.

So a question to begin with then

How do we know someone loves us?

By their words? By their actions? Both?

(pause)

## GOD'S LOVE FOR HIS PEOPLE (Mal 1:2-5)

[PowerPoint 3 heading]

In Malachi 1 - verse 2

God states He loves His people

[PowerPoint 3a-God loves. How?]

Malachi's style - as we said - is to raise a potential objection by the people - in asking "How have you loved us?" (still in v2)

[PowerPoint 3b-Jacob and Esau]

God demonstrates how He loves His people by referring to the story of Jacob and Esau back in the book of Genesis

Jacob and Esau were the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah

Esau was the firstborn and the older twin - Jacob the younger twin

In Jewish culture - the firstborn got the father's authority and responsibilities - when the father died - this is known as the birthright -

In addition to this authority and responsibility as the head of the family - the firstborn got twice the inheritance of any other sons

However - in God's sovereignty

He chose Jacob - the 2<sup>nd</sup> born - to be head - over Esau the 1<sup>st</sup> born

That's what Malachi's referring to in v2 & 3

When He says that God loved Jacob and hated Esau

We struggled with this statement in our Bible studies this week

The idea of God loving Jacob and hating Esau

What we need to understand about the statement - that *God loves Jacob and hates Esau* - is that God is sovereign - and He can do what He likes

We need to also understand that we can't just take one verse in the Bible and say - God hates people!

Because Deut 23:7 tells the Israelites [the descendants of Jacob] to:

*not hate an Edomite [Esau's descendants], for the Edomites are related to you*

So if God is telling the Jews not to hate the descendants of Esau then God Himself can't literally hate them either...

God hates sin - He can't look at sin - because it is the opposite of His goodness and love

I came across this illustration this week - and I can relate to - and hopefully you can too:

*One day a minister sat in the vestry of the church to meet anyone who might have spiritual difficulties. One person came in; "What is your difficulty?" asked the minister. The person answered, "My difficulty is the where the Bible says, 'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated,'"*

*"Yes," said the minister, "there is great difficulty in that verse; but which part of the verse is difficult for you?" The last part, of course," said the man. "I cannot understand why God should **hate** Esau."*

*The minister replied, "That verse has often been difficult, but my difficulty has always been with the first part of the verse. I never could understand how God could **love** that wily, deceitful, cheating scoundrel Jacob."*

[PowerPoint 3c-Love and Hate]

So - God **loving** Jacob - should be seen in terms of God **choosing** Jacob - to be His instrument in establishing His people - Israel

At the same time - God **hating** Esau - can be seen in terms of God **rejecting** Esau and His descendants

Two things are in play here - a) God can have mercy on whomever He wants and b) God knows the beginning from the end - He knows what Jacob and the nation of Israel will be like - He knows what Esau and His descendants the Edomites will be like [foreknowledge]

The Apostle Paul picks up this dilemma in Romans 9 from verse 10

<sup>10</sup> ...Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. <sup>11</sup> Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: <sup>12</sup> not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." <sup>13</sup> Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

<sup>14</sup> What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! <sup>15</sup> For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

<sup>16</sup> It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy...<sup>18</sup> Therefore God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden.

<sup>19</sup> One of you will say to me: "Then why does God still blame us? For who is able to resist his will?" <sup>20</sup> But who are you, a human being, to talk back to God? "Shall what is formed say to the one who formed it, 'Why did you make me like this?'"

So - God chose Jacob - to make a nation from - and to be His people

Jacob had 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel

God chose Jacob/Israel - not just for the sake of Israel but for the sake of the world - so God's people could expand beyond the borders of Israel - even down to us today

At the same time - God rejected Esau and his descendants - the Edomites

And that's God's business - to do as He pleases

[PowerPoint 3d-None of us]

The truth of the matter is none of us deserve God's grace - but God is merciful and has chosen people ahead of time to be His adopted sons and daughters who have faith in Jesus...

That's what Ephesians 1:4 says:

For he [God] chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

And so - God chose to step into history through a descendant of Jacob - namely, Jesus

And Jesus was prepared to lay down His life for everyone who sins and breaks God's rules

God's love is not just the words - "I love you"

God demonstrates His love with action

[Powerpoint 3e-demonstrate]

Romans 5:8 says

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And John 3:16

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

That's amazing love - that God would love us that much - He would allow His only son - Jesus - to die for us to have our sins forgiven - to take our punishment for our sins away from us - and give us a place in Heaven

### **RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE (Mal 1:6-14; Romans 12:1-2)**

God's amazing love requires a response

### **ISRAEL'S RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE (Malachi 1:6-14)**

[PowerPoint 4-Heading]

So in Malachi 1:6-14 - we see what Israel's response to God's love should be and what it actually is

[PowerPoint 4a-honour]

See V6 - Malachi says God is Israel's Father - so He should be honoured

[PowerPoint 4b-sacrifices]

But the priests of Israel didn't honour God - they dishonoured Him - they offered defiled - disabled and diseased animals - as sacrifices - like a one legged cow!

The purpose of the sacrifices was supposed to be - to please God and to offer the animals as punishment for the people's sins (instead of the people being punished) - and so that God could forgive the people through these animal sacrifices

### [PowerPoint 4c-not their best]

The priests didn't offer God their best - but their leftovers - so they are accountable - they are God's under shepherds - but instead they are insulting Him and leading people astray - and not giving proper attention to God's formula for sacrifice. There can't be forgiveness if the sacrifices aren't done the way God prescribed

### [PowerPoint 4d - people]

The people are also at fault - because they're the ones giving these disabled and diseased animals to the priests for sacrifice

Israel's response to God's love is a gross insult!

## JESUS' RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE

### [PowerPoint 5-Heading]

In comparison - Jesus' response to God's love is the complete opposite to the priests and people

### [PowerPoint 5a-obey's Father's will]

Jesus is not like the priests - He always obeys the will of the Father - in Luke 22:42 - Jesus says this in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Jesus is the perfect *priest*

### [PowerPoint 5b-sacrifice]

And unlike the Jews sacrifices - Jesus is the perfect *sacrifice* without any defect or disease - and without sin - Jesus is the once and for all sacrifice to remove our sins (Hebrews 10:10-11)

## OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S LOVE (Malachi 1:14 & Romans 12:1-2)

We've seen the poor response to God's love from the Israelites

And the perfect response from our Lord Jesus - as the instrument of God's love

[PowerPoint 6-heading]

What should our response to God's love be?

Well - have a look at the end of v14 of Malachi chapter 1

[PowerPoint 6a-Reverent fear]

God is the Great King and His name is to be feared - **reverent fear** - wanting to please God - not let Him down - that's what our response to God's love should be

The rest of our response is from our NT reading Romans 12:1-2

In view of God's mercy - in view of what Jesus did on the cross for us

[PowerPoint 6b-offer]

We need to **offer our bodies - as a living sacrifice** - holy and pleasing to God

It's like we have to say to God:

*"Lord, I've already given You my heart, but now here is my body! Help me to keep it clean, pure, and undefiled. Use me for Your glory in any way You see fit. I'm Yours to command!"*

Our response should not be like the priests in Malachi's day - who gave their leftovers as sacrifices - and who had a *half-hearted couldn't care less attitude*

*There's a story of Queen Mary [the Queen's grandmother], who visited Scotland every year. She was so loved by the people there that she often mingled with them freely without any escort. One afternoon while walking, she went a bit further than she'd planned. Dark clouds came up unexpectedly, so she stopped at a nearby house to borrow an umbrella. "If you will lend me one," she said to the lady who answered the door, "I will send it back to you tomorrow."*

*The woman in the house didn't recognize Queen Mary and was reluctant to give this stranger her best umbrella. So she handed her one that she intended to throw away. The fabric was torn in several places and one of the metal strips was broken.*

*The next day there was another knock on the woman's door. When she opened the door, she was greeted by a royal guard, who was holding her old, tattered umbrella. "The Queen sent me," he said. "She asked me to thank you for loaning her this." For a moment the woman was stunned, then, she burst into tears. "Oh, what an opportunity I missed," she cried. "I didn't give the Queen my very best!"*

[PowerPoint 6c-our best]

[Scouts – DYB] [Jar – filled with big thing first]

We must **give God the best of ourselves** - not 2<sup>nd</sup> best - not our left overs

- Give the best of our time - putting time aside for Him before anyone or anything else
- Give the best of the gifts that He has given us - use those gifts to serve others and bring glory to Him
- Give the best of our money and possessions - it's not our money - it's not our possessions - we only have them because He's blessed us with them - so we should share them with others

As 1 Peter 4:8-11 says

<sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.<sup>9</sup> Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.<sup>10</sup> Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. <sup>11</sup> If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ...

[PowerPoint 6d-examine]

And we need to **examine our hearts** - as Psalm 139-23-24 says:

<sup>23</sup> Search me, God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

<sup>24</sup> See if there is any offensive way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

As we examine our hearts - what things do we need to confess and say sorry to God for? What do we need to change?

(pause)

[PowerPoint 6e=not world]

Then in V2 of our NT reading from Romans 12 - Paul tells us **not to conform to the pattern of this world** - which is selfish, egotistic - rat race - with a "what about me" attitude? We need to act and think - not what the world would do and think but what Jesus would do and think!

As Christians we must not be hypocrites - our actions must match our faith in Jesus

Having the mindset of Jesus - will in fact *renew our mind* - change our way of thinking - have our thinking focused on pleasing Jesus. Once we start thinking like Jesus - Paul says we can work out what God's will is for us

God wants our actions and thoughts to be totally His

That's our response to God's love!

## CONCLUSION

Yes God has and does love us - in Jesus

Our response to His love is to love Him back and honour Him

[PowerPoint 7-Conclusion]

Let me finish with Paul's words to the Corinthians - from 1 Cor 6:20

You were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your bodies.

Let's pray...