

TRUE HOPE
May 11, 2015
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MALACHI 1:1-13

- Happy Mothers Day to all the moms! Let's think about the love relationship between mothers and their children.
- A mother's love is special. We even joke: "That's a face only a mother could love!"
- **What are some examples of how a mother shows her love for her child?**
- **What are some examples of how that child returns that love to their mother?**
- As much as the mother shows her love, sometimes the child can be neglectful, disrespectful, or disobedient. In most cases (not all but most), **what is Mom always willing to do?**
- Footnote: I recognize not everyone experiences the mother and child relationship we're describing. However, we all get the example and in this lesson we'll talk about how we can all experience perfect love...the love of our Heavenly Father.

Now, you may be wondering: What does that discussion have to do with Malachi. How in the world will we tie that discussion into an Old Testament prophet's message to the rebellious Jews in Jerusalem in 430 B.C.? Stay with me.

Here's the big idea: God loves you with an amazing love! A love that commands honor and respect. A love that's always there even when we aren't so lovable. God gave us His best and He deserves OUR best.

The name Malachi means "messenger." The first verse says God gave him an "oracle" for the people. That word literally means "burden." A burden Malachi had to get off his chest.

The literary style is interesting. Malachi delivers his message in a series of hypothetical dialogs between God and the people. God calls them out; they defend themselves; God sets them straight. Let's look at the first eleven verses and listen in on the conversation. To help us get it I'm reading from the New Living Translation.

Malachi 1:1–1 (NLT)

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!’ ” [Now God turns to the priests in the temple.]

6 The Lord of Heaven’s Armies says to the priests: “A son honors his father, and a servant respects his master. If I am your father and master, where are the honor and respect I deserve? You have shown contempt for my name!

“But you ask, ‘How have we ever shown contempt for your name?’

7 “You have shown contempt by offering defiled sacrifices on my altar.

“Then you ask, ‘How have we defiled the sacrifices?*

“You defile them by saying the altar of the Lord deserves no respect.

8 When you give blind animals as sacrifices, isn’t that wrong? And isn’t it wrong to offer animals that are crippled and diseased? Try giving gifts like that to your governor, and see how pleased he is!” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

9 “Go ahead, beg God to be merciful to you! But when you bring that kind of offering, why should he show you any favor at all?” asks the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

10 “How I wish one of you would shut the Temple doors so that these worthless sacrifices could not be offered! I am not pleased with you,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, “and I will not accept your offerings. 11 But my name is honored* by people of other nations from morning till night. All around the world they offer* sweet incense and pure offerings in honor of

my name. For my name is great among the nations,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

12 “But you dishonor my name with your actions. By bringing contemptible food, you are saying it’s all right to defile the Lord’s table. 13 You say, ‘It’s too hard to serve the Lord,’ and you turn up your noses at my commands,” says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. “Think of it! Animals that are stolen and crippled and sick are being presented as offerings! Should I accept from you such offerings as these?” asks the Lord.

- Let’s understand these verses then figure out what they mean to us.
- The first sentence of verse two is profound. **What does God always say to His children?**
- **How does God predict the people would respond? What are they doubting? Why?**
- That’s the oldest trick in Satan’s book. **How did He use that with Eve in the Garden?**

If Satan can ever make me doubt God’s love for me, he can manipulate me any way he wants!

- Verses two through five give an interesting example of God’s love for the people of Israel.
- **Who were Jacob and Esau? What role did God choose Jacob to play?**
- Your translation may say God “hated” Esau. It simply means “rejected.”
- Esau was a macho man’s man and his twin Jacob was a mama’s boy homebody.
- You’d think God would have chosen Esau to be the father of the nation.
- God doesn’t look for outward confidence, he uses those who will depend on Him.

Warren Wiersbe summarizes what these verses are about:

“God proves His love to His people [Israel] in two ways: (1) He graciously chose Jacob, their father, and rejected Esau, who in many ways was a much better man; and (2) He judged the Edomites (Esau’s descendants) and gave to Israel the best of the lands. He promised Israel a land flowing with milk and honey, but, alas, their sins polluted the land. Even then, he graciously restored them to their land and delivered them from captivity.”

- Verse six: God turns to the priests in the temple. They had become complacent at best and corrupt at worst. **What does verse six say the priests were not giving God?**
- Verses seven and eight: **How were they being disobedient in their roles as priests? What were they supposed to give God? What WERE they giving Him?**
- **How could you and I be guilty of the same thing today?**
- The priests had become bored, lazy, corrupt, and sinful.
- Instead of giving God the BEST they were allowing the people to give Him the WORST.
- Back to our example of mother's day: Would you give mom a card you found in the street with tire tracks and mud on it? Do we ever do that in response to God's love?
- *"God, thank you for giving me eternal life and unending love. To honor you I'll give you whatever I can find on the side of the road." "God, look, I went 'dumpster diving' to bring you my gifts." "Here are my leftover time, talents, resources."*
- Back to the priests: Would you agree that "priests" are God's representatives to the people? Did you know every follower of Christ is like a priest to those who don't believe?

1 Peter 2:9 (ESV)

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

- As God's representative to proclaim His love to others, does my response to Him live up to how much He has loved me? *"Wow, you must really love God based on what I see."*
- Let's change up the discussion we started with about mothers and children.
- **What are some examples of how God shows His love for his children?**
- **What are some examples of how we should return that love to God?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- God loves us with an amazing love! A love that commands honor and respect.
- A love that's always there even when we aren't so lovable.
- God gave us His best and He deserves OUR best.

Romans 5:8 (ESV) tells us...

8 ...God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- That love is available to everyone who BELIEVES in Christ for salvation.
- It's an everlasting love and nothing can stop it!

Romans 8:39 (ESV) says NOTHING...

...in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

David Crowder wrote a contemporary worship song simply titled: "*How He Loves.*"

*He is jealous for me
[His] Loves like a hurricane
I am a tree
Bending beneath the weight of His wind and mercy*

*When all of a sudden
I am unaware of these afflictions eclipsed by glory
And I realize just how beautiful You are
And how great Your affections are for me*

*Oh, how He loves us so
Oh how He loves us
Oh how He loves*

- Even when life's at it's worst, we can cling to the reality "...how He loves us so!"
- The question is, how will I respond to that love?