

# MALACHI

**Bible Readings:** Malachi 1:1-8, 13b-14,  
Malachi 3:1-4, 7b-10, 16-18



## Introduction: It's Mine!!

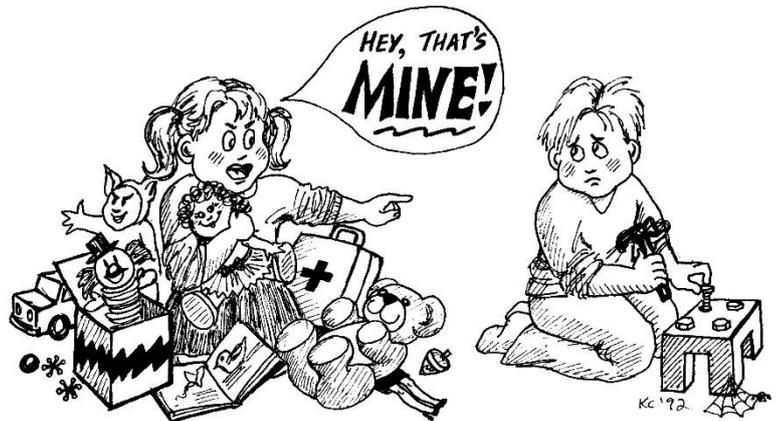


My grandson Ollie loves coming to 'Mama's house. I always hope it is to see me, but more often than not the first thing he says is 'CAR'. He loves the little Tikes car I have. Who wishes they had one of these when they were little, well don't worry because now they have big ones for grown-ups that actually drive on the road!! Ollie goes outside, hops in his car and insists on driving it inside and of course Mama lets him!!!! He thinks it is his because he has it all to himself when he is there. Mind you he still thinks it is his when my other grandchildren are there and so does my other 2 year old grandson Patrick!! You might be familiar with the

Toddler Creed, It's Mine!!

### The Toddler Creed

1. If I want it, it's mine
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If it's in your hand, it's mine.
4. If it looks like mine, it's mine
5. If I think it's mine, it's mine.
6. If it's yours, it's mine.
7. If I saw it first, it's mine.
8. If you saw it first, it's mine.
9. If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine.
10. If you are playing with something and put it down, it's mine.
11. Actually if you are playing with something, it's mine.
12. If I like it, it's mine.
13. If you like it, it's really mine.
14. Everything is mine!! MINE!! MINE!! MINE!!



But they are still so cute when they are little!!! But not when they should know better as they get older and certainly not as grownups but it is precisely this childish behavior and attitudes from the Israelites that the prophet Malachi has to address.

## 1/ God's Love

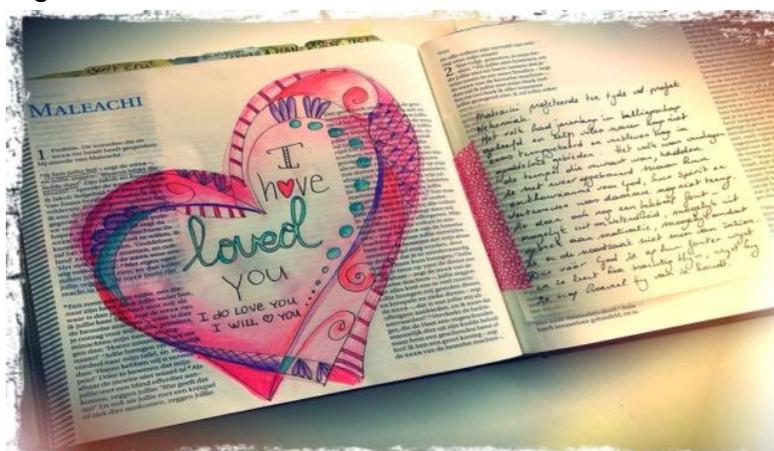
By the time Malachi arrived on the scene the temple had been rebuilt, Nehemiah had overseen the rebuilding walls of Jerusalem, and the nation had been reformed, albeit still under the governing eye of Persian rule. Malachi's purposes were not physical, in the terms of building a sanctuary as his predecessors Haggai and Zephaniah, but spiritual. His goal was to address the formalism and skepticism of a people who had lost any sense of God's presence in their lives. Malachi means 'messenger' and ultimately his message is about God's love; about His love for

His chosen people, and about His faithfulness in that love, in spite of their rejection of Him and rebellion against Him. Malachi has a burden on his heart as his people were going the wrong way.

“God starts this message: “I have loved you,” says the LORD. The emphasis is on God’s faithful love for His unfaithful people. The beginning and the end of Malachi is like two bookends. At one end are the beautiful words, “I have loved you” and a promise in 4:2 “But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.” The prophecy begins with God’s love in the present and ends with God’s promise for the future. Everything in between is God’s program to get us from here to there. God wants to turn our lives around, and as part of His program for our spiritual progress, God longs for us to give Him our best. Because He has given us His best - He has loved us with a perfect love, an unending love, an everlasting love.

Malachi doesn’t begin with what the people have done, speak of coming judgement or rebuke his people for their sin, God starts out by declaring what He has done to them, He has loved them: “I have loved you,” says the Lord.” He begins with their relationship. The word “love” is

in the perfect tense, indicating that God not only loved in the past but loves in the present as well. We could say it this way: “I have loved and do love you.” “I have loved you in the past and today I love you still and will keep loving you.” And the word He chooses for “love” is not the typical Old Testament term that describes



“tough love” or “covenant love.” The word God uses here is more relational: “I have embraced you. I have expressed my affection for you,” says the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> “They would not have existed as God’s people unless God had loved them, chosen them, maintained His faithful covenant love by forgiving their sins and rebellions, restoring them, rescuing them from their enemies, providing for their needs, answering their prayers, providing them with priest and sacrifices and sending the prophets to teach and encourage them.”<sup>2</sup> **And for us** this truth still holds in our lives - regardless of the circumstances you are facing - whether you are facing problems or victories - this truth remains: God loves you!” Do you know that, are you sure, do you ever doubt it? Here it is clear He never does not love you!!!!

God declares his love for them and that’s when their argument begins. “How have you loved us” is their retort. To deny that God loved them, after all He has done for them is to deny God Himself for GOD IS LOVE. This question denies the grace of God which made them His own people, they are denying their own identity as God’s chosen flock, nation and people. If they have voiced this with their words to God, you can be sure they have been mouthing these thoughts off to one another!! These people doubted God’s love for them, perhaps because they were still under Persian rule, no longer in captivity, but still ruled over by a foreign power. They felt like God had not prospered them, that He had let them down, that if He really loved them life would be a lot easier, better and they would be happier!!

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/problems-in-worship-dean-rhine-sermon-on-malachi-204966?ref=SermonSerps>

<sup>2</sup> Adam, Peter, *Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Malachi*, Nottingham; IVP, 2013. pg 36

God says He, “loved Jacob, and hated Esau,” He is not referring to those individuals, but to the nations that sprang out from those individuals. He is reminding them of His love and faithfulness. The word “hate” here is not an emotional statement, but a matter of preference – much like someone might say “I hate vegetables.” Jacob is synonymous with Israel, and Esau with the Edomites. Edom would never prosper. The mystery here is not that the Lord hated Esau, but that He loved Jacob. HOW COULD GOD LOVE JACOB? As an individual, Jacob was a schemer and manipulator. As a nation, Israel was at best fickle; the people would at times serve God only to later rebel and worship idols. Why would God want to love Jacob? For that matter why should God want to love you or me? There is nothing about us that should cause God to love us: He loves us because He IS love, because we are created in His image. The proof of God’s love lay in the matter of His Sovereign choice. He had chosen and favoured Israel above all the nations of the earth. Israel had much to be thankful for purely because of God’s love for them. What was it that set Israel apart? What made them special? Nothing, but the grace of God.



## 2/ It's not fair!!!

Who loves long car trips with kids in the back seat. Are we there yet? I have to go to the toilet. I'm hungry. He hit me. Mum tell her to stop making noises. How much farther? Are we there yet? I'm thirsty. Oops, I didn't mean it. Sorry dad. My finger's stuck. Are we there yet? He took my lolly pop. Don't touch me. I dropped my texta. Mum, he keeps

looking at me. Are we there yet? The people of Judah were on a long trip with God and they just kept talking at God...whining . . .complaining . . . not praying to God mind you – talking at Him. Why do evil people have nice houses and lots to eat? Why do you let the other nations press in on us? Are we there yet? They've got more stuff than us! It's not fair! They, like children were never happy! No wonder in Malachi 2:17 Malachi says God is wearied by their words.

The Book of Malachi outlines seven defensive questions asked by the Israelites each time the prophet, or God, makes a statement, or an accusation and the people retort with, “Is that so?” They contradict, question and refute what God is saying.

1/ When He said He loved them. They retorted How have you loved us?

2/ When He said you have shown contempt for my name. They argue How have we despised your name?

3/ When he said you have defiled my altar. With contempt they query How have we defiled your altar?

4/ When you questioned me and tested my patience. They remonstrate How have we wearied you?

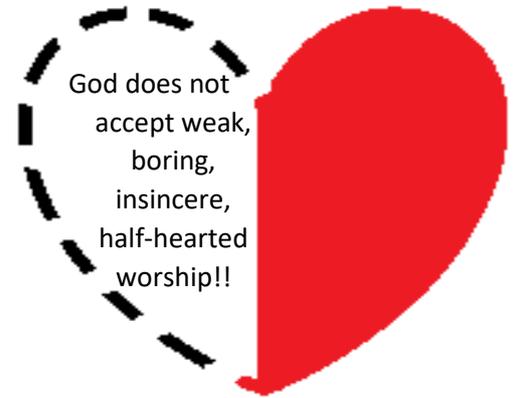
5/ When He says you have deserted my fellowship? They object, How have we neglected fellowship with you?

6/ When He says you have robbed me of what is mine? Offended they say, How have we robbed you with our tithes and offerings?

7/ You have spoken arrogantly against me and my call to service? With disdain they say How have we spoken against you?

These people were formally worshipping, but they were spiritually insensitive, totally unaware of how their lives were an offence to God. They disdained God’s love, and their disregard for Him could be clearly seen in both their attitudes and their actions; both by the priests and the people.

The priests were professional preachers. Hirelings, who just went through the motions of ritual and ceremony with no real thought or care to their duties. They cheated God by bringing before Him shabby offerings as we see in chapter 1:7-8 They brought animals that were blind, diseased and crippled – those that were of least value to the farmer. The people saved the best for themselves, and the priests accepted that. They cheated the people through their shabby example. They had lost the respect of those they were supposed to lead and serve. But the people too showed tremendous contempt for the things of God. Jews were supposed to recognise one another as brethren, as peers, and treat each other with justice and equity – but that wasn't happening, instead they dealt treacherously with each other, betraying one another, backstabbing each other, cutting one another's throats. They forgot, and sometimes we forget, that how we treat one another, when we gossip, when we criticize, when we judge, when we complain, when we make assumptions, when we are complacent, that these things actually reflect on our love for God, they impinge on our relationship and fellowship with Him and those whom we are trying to reach notice. God is saying to them, "Don't even bother coming to church if you aren't coming with the right attitude!" Because God is NOT pleased with "half-hearted" worship. Keep your two bucks and sleep in next Sunday! God doesn't need or want your leftovers!



How is your relationship with God? Is it thriving? Is it growing? Does it excite you? Are you enjoying fellowship with Him? Are you weary in your worship and in your service of God? If yes, then, why? Their attitude towards God is not love, but apathy. Instead of looking forward to their time of worship, they looked forward to going home and getting on with their day. Going to church was just one more thing they thought they "had to do" and they lost all the joy and passion of worship. Do we ever get like that? Where we view coming to church as a burden? Unfortunately, of course we do at times but we need to keep it in check. Don't let spiritual indifference rob you of the joy that God wants you to experience in your relationship with Him. Let's never forget WHY we worship and WHY we give our offerings: Because God is great and because He loves us with a never ending love!! If you want to truly understand how much you love God, ask yourself 2 questions: WHAT do you offer Him and HOW do you worship Him?

The Israelites also engaged in intermarriage – 2:11 Such marriages were forbidden under the law in part to preserve the Messianic line, and maintain the peculiarity of Israel, but also to because they would inevitably, as Solomon's example so drastically proved, would lead to idolatry. They practiced immorality – In many cases were divorcing their wives to enter into these marriages with pagan women. They were guilty of indebtedness – 3:8-10 They had failed in their giving, defrauding God in their tithes and offerings. Malachi said they "robbed God". Did you ever consider the possibility of that? That we could rob God? When we fail to tithe we are saying, "It's all me! It's my skill, my knowledge, my stuff, and there is no blessing". God is saying to Judah, "You are keeping everything I've given to you for yourself. And how's that working out?"

Tithing is first of all a matter of honoring God in your life. It is a matter of worship. "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house," for this is how God has planned to accomplish his work. The tithes and offering supported the work of God, as they still do today. I hear many of you saying tithing is an Old Testament law, in the New Testament it is different for we are under grace. But do you really think that a Christian ought to give less under grace than a Jew under Law? The New Testament expects us to give beyond and to do it cheerfully.

The Hebrew word for 'giving' here is not giving to God as an act of charity or donation but as an act of devotion. It is an offering and an opportunity not an obligation. How is your giving?

It seems incredulous that with such a list of transgressions the retort for each, from the people was 'But' "Wherein." or "How".



This blatantly revealed their:

Spiritual Ignorance: (They did not know)

Spiritual Indifference: (They did not care)

Spiritual Incompliance: (They did not listen)

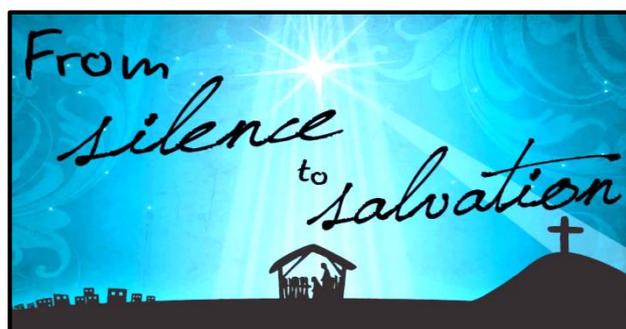
Spiritual Impertinence: (They argued with God, they knew better!!)

### 3/ Refining Love

To deal with the people's sin once and for all God is going to send the perfect, unblemished, final sacrifice in Jesus. Malachi prophesied that when the Lord comes it will be sudden! Before his appearing there will be a messenger who prepares the way whom we now know as John, the Baptist, who came to announce the coming of the Messiah. He will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Malachi speaks of the refiner's fire that burns off the dross and leaves pure gold. It takes a fire of over 2400 degrees to melt gold and when you do that burns off all the dirt and separates out the impurities. Purify (v 3) is the same word for clean or cleanse in the Bible and the word 'purge' is for clearing the unclean element. Purify means to enhance but purge means to empty something of unwanted material to purify it by completely getting rid of the impurities, the dross or the waste. This is harder work!!

Malachi also speaks of being cleansed with fuller's soap. A fuller was a person who cleaned wool cloth of oil, dirt, and other impurities making it thicker. It made the wool pure and clean. The Lord is Coming... To Refine and Purify then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years. How can they fix and restore their relationship with God? By returning to the Lord. The word 'Return' is an imperative, "return" occurring four times in this chapter. To return means to make a U-turn, to turn things around. It means to have a change or a conversion, to be committed to the Lord and be concerned for His name. The options are to return or be removed.

How does God display His love, in Mal. 3:16 it says, "By the remembrance of His saints" what a beautiful verse? Have you ever considered that God is listening to every conversation, keeping a record of when we speak lovingly about his name? God loves us... and love must be reciprocated, and when it is God takes note. Malachi the last book of our Old Testament are God's final words to the nation for 400 years. Between Malachi and Matthew God says nothing, not one word. We move from silence to salvation. The next time He speaks to this nation it will not be by the written word, but by the living Word, Jesus Christ, not by the prophets, but by THE Prophet, the one whom Malachi describes as "the messenger of the covenant".



## Conclusion: God's Love – IT'S OURS!!!!

"In Malachi God starts by reaffirming His love for a wayward people. Malachi's mandate was to call the people back to a real and vibrant relationship with the living Lord. Their problem, like ours often is, was not ignorance, but indifference. It's easy to become apathetic towards God and justify our own behavior, we become blind. God's people had stopped going to the Temple to worship and those who did gave God only the leftovers of their lives and love. Their lips formed prayers, but their hearts were hard. They blamed God for everything and themselves for nothing."<sup>3</sup> It's easy to spend your life saying it isn't fair. God hasn't given me a fair deal. Before you can hear what God has to say to you, you have to stop talking. Just quit whining for a while and start listening. If you do this is what you'll hear.



"You my child are the reason I gave up the glory, the power, and the prerogatives of God and became a flesh and blood human being, a baby. You are the reason I came with the message of life and hope. You are the one I died for so as you would not have to endure the punishment for sin that you deserved. I bore it for you. Through the Holy Spirit I have put my own stamp of ownership on you. Why? Because I love you with a never ending love and I always will. In the words of another prophet Isaiah – You are mine, mine, mine!!!!"

Malachi knows at the heart of God's people, the church, there must lie a deep, radical and overwhelming conviction that God loves them. We have to be prepared to receive His love as ours!! Without this embedded in our heart, deep within our Spirit how can we love? God's last words to His people before Jesus comes, are simply, "I love you." That love is yours, it's ours, let's honour Him with our lives, with our worship and with our love!!



### Prayer:

Lord God, Thank you that you love us with a never ending love. May we never take that for granted. Please don't let spiritual indifference blind us to our sin, to your provision or to your faithfulness. Don't let our complacency rob us of the joy of knowing we are loved and always will be. May we worship you with full and sincere hearts, without distraction. Please help us to honour, respect and love one another in such a way that many will be drawn to your love and come to know you.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

*Ange van der Leeuw*  
29<sup>th</sup> October, 2017



<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/problems-in-worship-dean-rhine-sermon-on-malachi-204966?ref=SermonSerps>