

Title: **“I LOVED JACOB.”**

Text: Malachi 1:2-5

Subject: *The Distinguishing Love of God for His Elect*

Date: Sunday Evening — April 5, 2009

Tape: Malachi #

Readings: *Bob Duff and Frank Hall*

Introduction:

After being delivered from 70 years of captivity in Babylon, you would think the children of Israel would have been humbled, thankful and full of praise, utterly consecrated to God. But that was not the case. In Malachi’s day they were a nation of self-absorbed complainers, griping and whining about everything, and full of unbelief. In this brief prophecy, we hear the chosen people raising question after question, expressing their unbelief. No matter what the Spirit of God inspired his prophet to declare, they raised an objection. It seems that they were determined to have the last word with God. — But, blessed be his name, the Lord God will never allow his chosen to have the last word with him! Thank God, he never will. — He always has the last word with us; and makes us thankful for it! Here is the Lord’s last word to you tonight.

(Malachi 1:2) “I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob.”

“I LOVED JACOB.” That is my subject tonight. Let’s read the rest of our text, and I will get right to my message.

(Malachi 1:2-5) “I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, (3) And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. (4) Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever. (5) And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.”

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Like the children of Israel, we often fall into ill humor, and to appear beaten down, depressed, and full of sullen unbelief. What wretched state of affairs! What a dishonor we cast upon God our Savior by our unbelief! “*What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved*” that God’s people are all the same in every age. In ourselves, we are ignorant, ungrateful and, for the most part, oblivious and insensible to his distinguishing mercies (Romans 3:9).

It is this evil of unbelief that I want to combat tonight. May God the Holy Spirit use his Word by Malachi to teach you and me to trust our God! May he graciously make us aware of God’s unalterable, free, sovereign, distinguishing mercy, love and grace in Christ Jesus!

LOVE DECLARED

Every word in this paragraph is weighty, and deserves the closest attention. **The Lord God begins his message to his chosen people with an unqualified, unconditional declaration of his love for us.** — “*I have loved you, saith the LORD!*”

“The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

When years of time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men, who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God’s love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming love and saving grace —
The saints’ and angels’ song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,

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Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints’ and angels’ song!”

This love, the love of God, is the source, the fountain, and cause of all our mercies. It is a subject that begins in eternity, in the gift of Christ, God’s dear Son, reaches through all the ages of time, and continues through eternity! God himself calls it “*an everlasting love!*”

(Jeremiah 31:1-4) “At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. (2) Thus saith the LORD, The people *which were* left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; *even* Israel, when I went to cause him to rest. (3) The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. (4) Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.”

“*I have loved you, saith the LORD.*” — God’s free, distinguishing love is declared throughout the Scriptures to every believer. It is this special, distinct, distinguishing, free, and sovereign love that is referred to in Malachi 1:2. I repeat, this is special, distinguishing love. It is not a meaningless, general love; but special, distinguishing love. — Read the next words: — “*Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau.*” That is precisely language the blessed Spirit of God inspired Paul to use when speaking about the election of grace (Romans 9:13).

(Romans 9:11-18) “(For *the children* being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to

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election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (12) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. (13) As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. (14) What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? God forbid. (15) For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. (16) So then *it is* not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (17) For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. (18) Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will *have mercy*, and whom he will he hardeneth.”

“I have loved you, saith the LORD!” — Multitudes will tell us that he loves us while we are willing and obedient. Indeed, the Scriptures say, *“Thou lovest them that love thee”* (Proverbs 8:17) — *“and showeth mercy to thousands of them that love thee, and keep thy commandments”* (Exodus 20:6). Though we might say, as Jeremiah did, *“Thou hast utterly rejected us: thou art very wroth against us”* (Lamentations 5:22), the Lord God says, *“No, I do love you! I am Jehovah, I change not”* (Malachi 3:6). Does he not declare, *“I will rest in my love, I will joy over thee with singing”* (Zephaniah 3:17). — *“For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel”* (Jeremiah 51:5).

The Lord had been displeased with their fathers (Zechariah 1:2); and they were no better than their fathers (Zechariah 1:3-4). Yet, the Lord God gives this sweet promise to his chosen: — *“Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad, and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem”* (Zechariah 1:17). — **John Trapp** observed, “There are four “yets” in the text, and all very gracious ones; to show that the fulness of sin in us doth not abate the fulness of love in God towards his people!”

It was at about this same time that the Levites held a solemn fast, described in Nehemiah 9, in which they made a catalogue of the many tokens and expressions of God’s love to his people. Besides countless extraordinary favors, he gave them

- good laws to direct them (Nehemiah 9:13),
- good Sabbaths of rest to refresh them (Nehemiah 9:14), and

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- his good Spirit to instruct them, (Nehemiah 9:20).

He forsook them not when they dealt proudly against him (Nehemiah 9:16-17),

- but crowned them with outward comforts (Nehemiah 9:21, 25),
- afflicted them when they provoked him (Nehemiah 9:26-27),
- sent them saviors when they cried to him (Nehemiah 9:27).

Though often they revolted, he was often entreated (Nehemiah 9:28) and withheld his judgments that would have destroyed them (Nehemiah 9:30-31).

Children of God, ponder this wonderful subject of distinguishing grace and love, here preached to us by the Lord himself. The Lord demands concerning the fact, “*Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?*” Yes! he was, his elder brother. As such, concerning the right of inheritance, Esau was legally entitled, and that by the very law of God, to the birth-right. But he was set aside by the decree of God from it; and Jacob was preferred and chosen. And this choice of the younger, and rejection of the elder, was in the decree of the Lord, before that either was born. Paul, the Apostle, was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to preach the sermon God gave Malachi to teach us the sweet, sweet doctrine of God’s sovereign election of our souls unto salvation in Christ. Mark, O my soul, mark the love tokens of God to his people! —

- Election in Christ Jesus from of old.
- Covenant engagements made by Christ on his behalf.
- Accomplished Redemption by the Lord Jesus.
- Regeneration and the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.
- Pardon of sin, free justification, adoption and sanctification.
- Preservation to this hour, and promise for all future time.
- Presentation in Glory!

This is a scanty list of the ways by which the Lord has said to every heaven-born soul, “*I have loved you.*”

- Do we not remember times of love when this was personally sealed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit?
- Even now the Lord speaks thus to his redeemed by his Word, and by his Spirit.
- Do you not hear it?

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- Are you not touched with such a gracious and condescending avowal of God’s love to your soul?

All these tokens of special love and distinguishing grace personally bestowed upon Jacob, were not limited to Jacob, but included all the seed of Jacob (Genesis 28:1-14). Those blessings were not merely temporal, physical blessings. We know that because as soon as the Lord bestowed them, Jacob was compelled to flee for his life. He told Pharaoh that the days of his pilgrimage had been few and evil (Genesis 47:9). Yet, he knew himself to be a man distinctly blessed of God in Christ.

- Chosen in Christ.
- Redeemed in Christ.
- Accepted in Christ.
- And blessed in Christ!

What a vast thought this is! God’s love for our souls in Christ is here set forth as that which is altogether free, and altogether without motives and conditions in us. It was bestowed upon us in Christ before we had any being in ourselves, or even in Adam, before we had done or could have done any good or evil!

“How many are there the distinguishing objects of this rich, free mercy in Christ, who through the weakness of their faith, and their inattention to divine things, even after partaking of the sweet effects of it, in regenerating, converting, renewing grace, are frequently without full and clear views of their happy and unspeakably blessed state in Christ, in the enjoyment of it?” — *Robert Hawker*

LOVED QUESTIONED

“*Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?*” — Shocking and disgraceful as it is, how often we question our Savior’s love for our souls! How often, how sadly, how dishonorably we hold the love of God to us in suspicion, as though his love for us depended upon something in us or done by us!

“*Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?*” Such a question is asked—

- Under great afflictions in which there seems to be no relief. Petulantly, the sorrowing one sometimes questions divine love.
- The sight of the wicked prospering often causes even a faithful David to vainly imagine that God’s love is suspended (Psalm 73). In horrid pride

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many a poor despised believer has rashly doubted the special love of God!

- In times of grievous doubt as to one’s personal salvation, and under heavy temptations of Satan, the same doubt has arisen.

LOVE ABOUNDING

(Romans 5:6-8) “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. (7) For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. (8) But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

(1 John 4:9-10) “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (10) Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins.”

(Ephesians 3:14-19) “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, (16) That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; (17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Illustration: *Worm in the Fire*

Upon what grounds dare we call into question the mercy, love, and grace of our God? We have absolutely no reason to entertain the slightest shade of doubt! Did he not promise? Will he not perform it? — “*God is not a man that he should lie*” (Numbers 23:19).

Mr. Spurgeon reasoned like this – “The Scripture says, ‘*He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life!*’ I believe the Son of God. I have life!” **Why should we question that ever?** Paul didn’t! (2 Timothy 1:12; 4:6-8).

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- “If God be for us, who can be against us?”
- “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”
- “Who is he that condemneth?”
- “Who shall separate us from the love of God?”

I refuse to doubt God’s love because of something I have thought, or said, or done. His love is free and unconditional! **I refuse** to question his grace because of my sin. While I acknowledge the abundance of my sin, I will rejoice in the superabundance of God’s free grace in Christ. **I am not** going to be suspicious of his mercy because I do not deserve his mercy. Mercy is for the undeserving!

ESAU HATED

The Apostle Paul, in the Book of Hebrews, explains Malachi’s account of Esau in verse 4. For those who seek to make God’s word in verse 3, “*and I hated Esau*” mean something less than God intends, just read the meaning God gives of it in verse 4. Even the Lord’s hatred of Esau was intended to display his love for Jacob. Even God’s treatment of the reprobate displays his love for his elect!

(Malachi 1:4) “Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the LORD of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and, The people against whom the LORD hath indignation for ever.”

Esau, who was a fornicator, and a profane person (Hebrews 12:16), was left to a reprobate mind, being rejected, or as Malachi in this portion of Holy Scripture speaks, hated of God. So also was all his race, the Edomites. When it is said here that his mountains and heritages were laid waste, it is obvious that the meaning is altogether spiritual.

- As the mountain of the Lord’s house is used to speak of the elect (Micah 4:1-2), so here the mountain of Esau represents the reprobate.
- Esau, and the seed of Esau, void of grace in this world, shall have no part in the glory of Christ in the world to come.

(Malachi 1:5) “And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.”

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(Ephesians 2:7) “That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.”

(Jude 1:24-25) “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present *you* faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, (25) To the only wise God our Saviour, *be* glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.”

(Revelation 19:1-6) “And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: (2) For true and righteous *are* his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. (3) And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever. (4) And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. (5) And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. (6) And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

LOVE ADORED

(Malachi 1:2-3) “I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? *Was* not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, (3) And I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.”

Child of God, before you go to bed tonight, sit down and mediate for a while upon some of the particulars and characteristics of God’s grace, and behold its freeness, fulness, greatness and sovereignty. How undeserving we are! How unexpected grace is! Yet, if possible, more astonishing still are the distinguishing operations of God’s grace for us and upon us!

“The Lord himself invites his redeemed people to this blessed study; and when a poor sinner can receive it, and mark his own interest in it, nothing more tends to humble the soul to the dust before God, and

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compels it to cry out, under a deep sense of its own unworthiness, ‘Lord, how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me, and not unto the world?’”
— Robert Hawker

In this demand of God, the question is decided and answered. — *“I have loved you, saith the Lord. But ye say, wherein hast thou loved us?”* Those words might be read, “Wherefore hast thou loved us, when we were utterly undeserving of your love? How is it, Lord, that your grace was so personal and distinct?” To that the Lord replies, *“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau.”*

It is as if the Lord had said, “I have been showing my distinguishing love for my elect from the beginning. Was not Esau Jacob’s brother, his elder brother and his stronger brother? Had there been any right of inheritance by birth, or from my covenant with Abraham, was not Esau to be preferred to Jacob? Yet, to shew the freeness and sovereignty of my decrees, before the children were born, before they had done either good or evil, it was said by me, *‘The elder shall serve the younger.’*”

“Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” — *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* — Trace this grand, glorious theme through the Book of God; and when you have done so, think of your own experience of God’s special love for you, and fall in the dust before him! It is, and ever must be, from the same distinguishing mercy, love and grace, and from this alone, that one man differs from another; for all that we have is what we first received.

- Where wert you, when the Lord Jesus passed by and bid you live?
- How were you engaged, when grace first taught your eyes to overflow?
- What were you, when he who persuades Japheth to dwell in the tents of Shem, persuaded you and constrained you by his love?

What is it that keeps you now, amid all your coldness, indifference, and wanderings, from falling away, but that same distinguishing love, and mercy, and grace? Who, but God our Savior, could keep the immortal spark of grace from going out, amidst those floods of corruption that arise within? Who but Christ could prevent the incorruptible seed, ever compassed about with weeds of wickedness in our nature?

Precious Lord Jesus! Let others say what they may, or think what they will, be it our portion to lie low in the deepest self-abasement, under the fullest

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conviction that it is your free grace alone, and not creature merit in our poor souls, that makes the difference between us and a reprobate world! Every time pride arises in our hearts, or any thought of personal excellence swells in our vain minds, speak these words to us by your Spirit and graciously make us hear your voice. — *“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord; yet! loved Jacob, and Esau have I hated.”*

(Malachi 1:5) “And your eyes shall see, and ye shall say, The LORD will be magnified from the border of Israel.”

Amen.