

## Malachi 1vs1-5

God demonstrates his love to us in choosing us to be his children therefore trust in his enduring promises.

### Introduction

Hi everyone and welcome to our devotional podcast on the book of James. My name is Musa from Christ Central Soweto.

Today we begin a new book in our devotions looking at Malachi 1vs1-5. It is a book written in a crucial time in Israel's history. At a time when the people of God were feeling apathy towards God and his law. There was lack of enthusiasm and interest in God and this came from a place of disappointment in God for what he had done for them so far.

It had been almost a century since Israel had returned from exile, the temple had been completed and rather than them

experiencing the promised glory days for the nation, they remained a province in the kingdom of Persia. This was a vast improvement from being captives in Babylon but far from the kingdom that God had promised. Their enemies were not defeated, the neighbouring nations were a constant thorn in their side.

And so, because of this disappointment they just went with the motions, giving God and his law a half-hearted attempt. Honouring God was just a cultural exercise, with no real devotion to him. The priests were accepting anything the people gave them and cut corners themselves. People didn't pay their tithes as they were expected and started marrying women from other nations and following their gods. When the prophets confronted Israel, Israel pointed the finger back at God and said he has been unfaithful so why should we be?

The issues that this book grapples with are very relevant for today for many of us sometimes feel that it is useless to follow God. We feel that he is quick to punish but he doesn't keep his end of the bargain. So rather than forsake him entirely we do things half-heartedly, we have other priorities other than Him. We serve God at our own convenience, when it suits us, paying only cultural significance to him. Perhaps for you this whole COVID-19 pandemic, the lockdowns, and loss of income have served to confirm what you felt in your heart for a long time, you share the words of Israel when they said in Malachi 2:17...

*“All who do evil are good in the eyes of the Lord, and he is pleased with them” or “Where is the God of justice?”*

If these are your feelings and concerns, I ask that we walk together in this book as God addresses these issues.

## Structure

The book of Malachi is structured of an intervention between two people in dispute. One party raises a dispute and the other party questions that assertion and a solution is sort. These series of disputes and answers help us to get to the heart of our relationship with God. God is being accused of changing on Israel, on not keeping his end of the bargain. So, God responds and says it is not I who have changed but you have yet I have not given up on you my people.

I have loved you (vs. 2)

At the beginning of the book God, through the prophet Malachi begins with words any man would love to hear from their God...

*<sup>2</sup> "I have loved you," says the Lord.*

But those words are not met with a sense of reassurance or comfort but rather they are met with Doubt. You say you love us God but how do we know that? What in your actions demonstrates your love to us? Our eyes do not see that love, are these not just empty words from you?

In response to this question God takes Israel back to her beginning and reminds them that Isaac had two sons, Jacob, and Esau. Jacob was the weaker brother, he was not even his father's favourite, yet I chose you Jacob. I loved you Israel and Esau I hated. It was not because of your looks, or because there was something to be gained by choosing you, but it was because of my love for you that I chose you.

To make this point clearer, he contrasts Israel with Edom (Esau's descendants). Edom is a nation that did not experience my love but my wrath. Edom was a nation that was a long,

consistent enemy of Israel, from the time of Moses but now God had turned their hill country into a wasteland only to be inherited by jackals. Despite their greatness effort and resolve to rebuild they will never come back to their glory days. When you see this, when you see my wrath on Edom compared to my love for you will say...

*'Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel!'*

God's love for Israel was seen in how he chose her and even though he disciplined her, he also showed her mercy and will restore her to her former glory. And how wonderful it is that on Christ we too are chosen by God and showed mercy. In the book of Romans Paul ponders about the same question of God's love for us and how we may be sure of it. How do we know that God loves us? We know because Christ died for us...

*<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

As we live in this world filled with disappointments and empty promises, we can rest on one simple and undeniable truth, God loves us...how do we know? Because while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This is a truth you can stake your life on because God does not change, for his love endures forever.

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