

# Malachi #2: I Have Loved You

by Ed Miller

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*In this sermon, Ed Miller explores God's profound love for His people as revealed in Malachi, emphasizing the need for a genuine relationship with Him amidst spiritual complacency.*

**Duration:** 1:06:53

**Scripture:** Malachi 1:2-3, Malachi 1:6, John 1:41, Romans 8:31, Romans 8:35

**Topics:** "Gods Love", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the book of Malachi and how God addresses the problems of his people. The speaker explains that God goes beyond dealing with the symptoms and digs deep to address the root problems. The speaker emphasizes that God's love for his people is unwavering and nothing in the universe can separate believers from his love. The sermon encourages listeners to trust in God's love and to allow him to address the underlying issues in their lives.

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## Transcript

Good morning, brothers. Who knows the possibilities of union with the Lord today? It's exciting to think about it. We're so thankful that all of you have come and in a special way, we want to welcome the young people that are here.

We are so thankful because you can't seek him too early and God can save a life as well as a soul. You young guys, you got the advantage over us. We have to grow backwards to where you are to receive from the Lord, so we're glad you're here.

Follow hard to know the Lord. As we come to the study of God's word, there's a principle of Bible study that you're well aware of, and I must say it just for my own heart, just to relieve myself, and that is total reliance upon God's Holy Spirit. Only God can reveal God.

Only the Lord can show himself. If we can only get a sense of how much he desires, how he longs to reveal himself, and he wants to show himself this morning. Now, let me share one little Bible verse that has meant a lot to me, and then we'll pray together and we'll look in the word.

John, chapter one, verse 41, contains a great truth. It's a verse that illustrates God's heart when he first met a man on the level of earth, when he first met him. John 141, thou art Simon, thou shalt be Cephas.

I love that. Thou art, thou shalt be. And God ever wants to take us from the place where we are and turn us into that which he wants to make us.

Thou art, thou shalt be. And only God knows all that we shall be. And so with that comforting truth, let's bow before the Lord and ask him to meet us where we are, take us where he'd have us.

Our Father, we thank you again for your precious Holy Spirit, the one who lives in us and dwells us, the one who searches the depths of God, the life of God, whose delight it is to unveil the Lord Jesus to our hearts. And I just pray this morning, Lord, that you might meet us, each one, and corporately that you might meet us and that you would sit us down and speak to us and search our hearts, oh God, dig deeply and then take us to the perfect answer. We thank you in advance that you will over answer this prayer.

We just pray that your burden that you have expressed so wonderfully in the book of Malachi, that we may lay hold of that by simple faith, we ask in the matchless name of our Lord Jesus, amen. Last night after the session, Brother Dave Strew made a comment to me. It sort of tickled me.

He said, all these perfect answers for these problems. I know it's going to be Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. I'm just anxious to see how you get there.

Well, he found the Rosetta Stone. It's always that. And forgive me, brothers, if I don't make him clear, because that's what it's all about.

And certainly that is the answer. So now I'm going to ask you to turn again, if you would, to the book of Malachi. For those who were not here last night, that's the last book in the Old Testament.

It's a book addressed, you'll remember just by way of review, addressed to the remnant. Don't get sidetracked by verse one and think it's only addressed to Israel. The way the word Israel is used in this book, and you can see it in chapter two and three, that it includes Jacob.

It's the remnant. God is addressing those that had returned out of captivity voluntarily, had embraced that good news, that decree that set them free and had gone back to the land of peace and to the land at that time, which was very much outside the camp. They had tasted the deep things of the Lord.

These are those who were the most blessed, the most privileged, who had drunk the most deeply of the Lord, most visited by Him, and were open to fellowship with Him outside the camp. No strangers to the Lord, those addressed in Malachi. They had seen His grace, experienced His mercy.

They had at that time, they were not facing the problems of turning to Baal or some false god. They were not being accused of making unholy alliances with foreign nations. There was no imminent threat of any impending danger of some kind of an attack from another nation.

This is the cream of the crop, back in the land, worshiping in the temple, restored priesthood. But as I pointed out last night, that was a long time ago. It had been a long time since God had spoken with His people.

They had heard from Him, they knew Him, they experienced Him, they tasted His deliverance. You could sit down with them and they could recall the goodness, the blessings of the Lord. But the burden that God had is that these people hadn't had a vital visitation from the Lord in a long time.

They weren't strangers, but because it had been so long, they began in their hearts to grow cold. And their life began to grow formal. And things started to become mechanical.

They still gathered, they still sang the songs, they still brought the offerings. But the offerings were not what they used to be. And the shields had now been turned from gold to brass.

And there was a heaviness, there was a deadness, there was a cloud that was settling over this very special, blessed remnant of God's people. And one of the great tragedies, probably the biggest of all, they didn't know it. They didn't know it was happening.

They didn't recognize it. It was so gradual. It was so subtle.

So insidious. So internal. If you pointed it out to them, they would have denied it.

In fact, in the book of Malachi, that's what happened. And it was in this, to this situation, that God came because it was breaking His heart. He saw His people, not rebellious, not turning away in some kind of an attitude, but just drifting, just getting colder and colder, further and further away, because there was moss on the revelation of God.

It had been so long since they had heard from Him. And so they entered into this gradual parching of the heart, and way down inside, a dry rot. Something was happening to God's people.

Outwardly, it was peace. It was prosperity. Looked okay on the outside.

And to this situation, a burdened God comes through His messenger, Malachi, to address these people, these hearts, this situation. As I pointed out in our introduction study, this book is a unique book. Unlike any book in the Bible, Malachi is a prophet like no other prophet.

He's a prophet, but he doesn't look like a prophet. He doesn't act like a prophet. He doesn't speak like a prophet.

This is not a book of sermons. This is not a book of warnings. This is not a book of visions.

That's what you see in the other prophets. Malachi's not around for 50 or 60 years like Hosea was. It's a different kind of prophet.

Malachi doesn't blast a ram's horn and call for a great convocation of God's people to hear the Word of the Lord like Joel does. That's a prophet. Joel.

Amos. Behold, the Lord roars from Zion. And then he stands up and he roars.

That's not him. Amos was a different kind of a prophet. He prophesied too in the days of prosperity, in the days of Uzziah the king, and so on.

But his book's full of visions. You don't see that in Malachi. Malachi is unique.

He's not like Micah, spitting out a whole catalog of sins and against God's people and foreign nations and so on. The prophet's there, but it's like he's not there. God is speaking.

And God is speaking directly. It's as if God, I said yesterday, it's as if God was a counselor and took His people aside into a room and said, sit down. We need to talk.

You've got to remember that Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. And there are things heavy on God's heart. And He says, I will not let you out of this testament until you are clear about My love.

You've seen the outline. Clear about My work. Clear about My people.

Clear about My ways. Clear about My faithfulness. Clear about My glory.

We've got to talk, because I hear, not from your lips, because you wouldn't dare say these things with your mouth. God says, I've been listening to your heart. I've been listening to the whisperings of your heart.

And God goes down and He brings it up. And they said, no, no, no. We would never say that.

And God said, let me show you. And He showed. That's what the book of Malachi is about.

God Himself coming. Chapter 1, verse 2, God speaking. I have loved you, says the Lord.

But you say, how have you loved us? And all through the book, God is speaking and His people talk back. I say this, but you say, but you say. Sixteen times over, but you say, but you say.

Chapter 1, verse 6, a son honors his father, a servant his master. If I'm a father, where's my honor? If I'm a master, where's my respect? If you're going to understand the book of Malachi, the prophecy of Malachi, you've got to get that in your heart. It's God talking to His people directly.

The prophet's there, but He's not there. It's God communicating. There's something going on down deep, and God wants to meet it.

God wants to deal with it. The book of Malachi is a personal interview between the Lord and His people about those things that are most precious to His heart. That's what the book of Malachi is about.

I'll be honest with you, God has done a number on my own heart as I've studied this book under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. I almost feel like a peeping tom when I study this book. I've only felt that way one other time, and that's when I studied the book of Habakkuk, because God also put a peephole in His prayer closet and allowed me to look in.

Precious book that, as well. But as you look into this interview, you're allowed in a room. God is counseling His people, and He's invited you to come in.

And pretty soon, you're not a spectator. You're in the chair. And that's what God did as I studied this book.

Let me get the method of the book before your heart once more, and then we'll pick up where we left off yesterday. Here's how the book unfolds. God sits His people down, and then God begins to dig.

He begins to get beyond the symptoms to the problem, because we always deal with the symptoms, and we forget the problem. God never deals with the symptoms. He deals with the problem.

And so we'll go away happily singing with a band-aid on a headache and think something's been done. But God loves us too much to allow us to just deal with the symptoms. And so He digs and He digs and He digs, because those things cannot lie undealt with.

They must be dealt with. They must come to the surface. And God touches things so deep and so fundamental, that as you go through the book, these people are shocked when God reveals it.

They're shocked. They deny it. It can't be.

I would never say those things. When you see some of the strong language in the book, you know with your lips, with your tongue, you'd never say, I despise your name. I hate your work.

Your ministry is tedious. The animal sacrifices are defiled. The table is defiled.

You'd never say that. Not here. But God says, I've been watching your life, your attitude, your disposition.

It's speaking to me. I hear your life. And way down deep are these whispers.

We're going to isolate six of them. From the book of Malachi. Watch the Lord go down and say, this is what you're saying.

They'll say, no we're not. We'd never say that. And He'll say, here's how I know.

And He'll show that. And then in each case, brothers, He gives the perfect answer. The perfect answer.

Which you already, the cat's out of the bag. It's Jesus. It's Jesus.

Well, that's the book as we left it last evening. Before we actually start our new material, I want to say a word about how I'm going to divide up these six lessons. This won't help you for the tape, brother.

As you know, we have another three sessions, counting this one, Lord willing, to do. And since there are six issues, it might seem logical to you that we'll take two in one session, and two in the next session, and the last two at the end. And to be honest with you, that was my plan.

But that's not how God has arranged it. And it's also not how God has ministered to my heart. And so I ran into a little problem.

Because it would be very logical to do two, two, two. Get them in order. But that would mean that some that I don't have as much light on, I've got to fatten up.

And some I've got to stretch out. And others I've got to cut off what I think is God's burden. And so I was in bondage to making a good outline.

And the Lord set me free from that. And I hope you're free with it, but here's what we're going to do. You're in a Bible school this weekend, and this is the semester.

And this semester, we're studying the book of Malachi. And when the bell rings and the period's over, we'll stop. And then we'll pick up.

Now, that might mean we'll get through one and a half or one and a quarter. It may mean we'll do three. I don't know.

Well, I do know, because I have my notes. I know what I'm going to do. I didn't know when I started.

I know now. But I'm just trying to tell you that if your notes for Lesson 1 ends up with one and a half points, we'll pick up there the next time. I'll try to stop in some logical place and not like Acts 21 stops with a comma.

You know, something's wrong with that. Anyway, so it won't be the neat little package that - I enjoy logical connection, but we're going to break it down a little differently. What I'd like to do now is invite you then to this first issue that God deals with and for which He gives a perfect answer.

I'm going to ask you to follow along, please. Malachi chapter 1. The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi. I have loved you, says the Lord.

But you say, how have you loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother, declares the Lord? Yet I have loved Jacob. But I hated Esau, and I've made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness. Though Edom says we've been beaten down, but we will return and build the ruins, thus says the Lord of hosts.

They may build, but I will tear down. Men will call them the wicked territory and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever. Your eyes will see this, and you will say, The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel.

How would you like to share on those verses? I tell you, before God dawned Himself on me, I really struggled with these precious verses. The first heart whisper has to do with the love of God. I've loved you, says the Lord.

In English, that's four words. I have loved you. In Hebrew, it's only two words.

God gets to the first issue, the first heart whisper in two words. I won't try to pronounce the Hebrew. I've loved you, says the Lord.

I have loved you. I still love you. I will always love you.

Now, don't you love Jeremiah 31.3? The Lord appeared to him saying, I have loved you. Can you finish it? With an everlasting love. Let me tell you one thing that that means, brothers.

I love you with an everlasting love. It means the Lord has never begun to love you. He has always loved you.

He has never started to love you. He's loved you with an everlasting love. There was never a time where He said, I think I'll start loving them.

Forever, He has loved you. And forever, He will love you. And yet you say, Malachi 1.2, how have you loved us? This is the beginning of the heart problems.

This is the first whisper that surfaces in this book. This is a basic issue. This is the background that we need to consider here.

Because perhaps we too have had a history with the Lord. Like they did. And maybe for some it's been a while since God has dawned on us and we've had a visitation from heaven.

And maybe things have been going okay in our lives. These people have known the Lord, walked with Him for years, served Him faithfully. They've seen His mysteries and His glory.

But now something's happening on the inside and there's an indication of a very serious problem. Something went on and they began to hold God's love in suspicion. This is the early indication of the slide

that's progressive that takes place in the book of Malachi.

I don't know if you're in the habit of having year verses and year books. I love to do that. Just another excuse to grab a scripture or to look at a book in a special way.

But for years I've done that. A book, we'll study it all year long in a special way. Malachi is my year book this year.

And I'm trusting God to minister. We should have had this conference at the end of the year. I might be able to give you some more light.

But this is my year book. And my year verse comes from this book, 3-6 this year. It's because I do not change that you are not consumed.

Well, what a verse that. I would expect it to say, because I'm patient, you're not consumed. Or because I'm loved, you're not consumed.

But it's because He's unchanging. Can you imagine if He had mood swings like we have? Boy, I'm glad He doesn't change. I don't think I'm in the mood to support you today and give you grace.

It's because He doesn't change, brothers, that we're not consumed. Well, anyway, this is the early indication. I sense, though, not enough, maybe at the end of the year, not yet.

But I see a little bit. I see a progress between these problems. That I don't really enter into problem two unless I have had problem one.

It builds. I can't make that definite. I think it's there.

Some of you brothers can study that. Malachi 1-2 is basically saying, from their hearts, I don't see an indication that you love me. Now, let me give you a little key to what was going on.

It comes up later in chapter 3. If you look at chapter 3 and verse 11, this is after another problem and a cure, but you get the indication. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground, nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes, said the Lord of hosts. God had sent a devourer.

Commentators think it might have been a locust invasion. We don't know what the devourer was. God leaves it blank.

He wants it blank. But God needed to shake these people up. God needed to stir these people up from the inside.

He needed to jar them. And so, whatever it is, it doesn't matter. God sent the devourer.

And the devourer started to devour. And they began to gobble up the crops. I've loved you, says the Lord.

How have you loved us? Haven't you seen this devourer devouring everything? Let me try to illustrate it. When you look at this issue, this first issue, we need to see that it's not a theological problem that they have. If you were to go to them, set them aside and say, I want to discuss with you the theology of the love of God.

Does God love you? What would they say? Yes, of course He loves us. He's loved us with an everlasting love. He's never begun to love us.

He loves us now. He'll love us forever. They had good theology.

They would not have had a problem with that. They would say, God is love. But then the devourer came.

Something like maybe in Job's life. All of a sudden, the devourer comes and it touches our kids. Our children are gone.

And our house is gone. And the bank account is gone. The devourer has come.

I've still got a good theology. But the devourer has come. And then maybe my body is touched.

And there's an incurable illness. What did they say? Maybe he had that black leprosy and elephantitis or whatever Job had. And I think one of the greatest trials of all, not the greatest, the greatest was he lost the sense of God's presence.

But one of the greatest was he lost the support, the spiritual support of his life companion. What a trial that! How I praise God for my wife and the support that she gives. What happens if the devourer comes along like that when the bottom falls out of everything? Every time you try to solve a problem, it gets worse.

And every time you try to get out of debt, you go deeper into the debt. And every time you try to come up with a solution, adverse circumstances mount. And then somebody comes up to you and says, God loves you.

See, that's what was going on. They know God loves them. But in their deep, deep heart comes this question.

How does God love us? How could this happen? How under God's heaven could this be allowed if God loved me, if He really cared? If He had a heart, if He was paying attention, if He's in control, if He's on the throne, do you see the issue, brothers? It's not theology. They know God loves them. They have a great creed.

They're orthodox, fundamental, Bible believing. They've got it. But when the devourer came, they began to entertain suspicions in their innermost being.

How does God love us? That needs to be dealt with. That needs to be dealt with. The very moment that I begin to question the love of the Lord, I am defeated in that moment.

The moment you begin to question that God loves you, that is so basic. That is so fundamental. You can't lose that.

You've got to know. And know with deep conviction that God really does love you. How does God deal with that? What answer does He give? Or may I say, what perfect answer does He give when I begin to entertain this question, these doubts, because the devourer has been allowed to come into my life? God gives a perfect answer.

In the book of Malachi, through all these precious chapters, God gets the last word. In every issue, with every case, He gets the last word. But He doesn't get the latest word.

He lets you talk. He lets you question. He lets you ask.

He lets you breathe out your sighs. And when you're all done, He speaks. And He speaks the word that lays the law of silence on your lip and on your tongue.

It's like Job when it was all over. What can I say? I put my hand over my mouth. Psalm 39.9 I was dumb.

I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it. Silence. Look at Malachi 1.5 please.

After He gives His answer, which we haven't looked at yet. He said, your eyes will see this, and you will say, the Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel. Once you see the answer, you'll say, the Lord be magnified.

May God give us the answer. If there's someone here that has been visited by a devourer, and in your deepest heart, you would never confess it, even to the closest friend. You wouldn't say, I'm starting to doubt that God loves me.

Nah, you're too theological for that. You wouldn't say that. But God hears the whispers of the heart and it breaks His heart.

He's burdened. And when those things cry, what answer does God give? Let me show you His perfect answer. And follow along.

I want to read once again these verses. Verse 2, I've loved you, says the Lord. You say, how have you loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother, declares the Lord, yet I've loved Jacob? But I hated Esau.

I've made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness. Though Edom says, we've been beaten down, we'll return and build the ruins. Thus says the Lord of hosts, they may build, but I'll tear down.

And men will call them the wicked territory and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever. Now remember, brothers, I tried to show you that it's not a theological problem. Do we agree on that? It's not a theological answer.

That is so important if you're going to understand this passage. I know people look at these verses, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated, and they jump right into the theology. Now it's a big theological discussion.

Especially when you tie it into Romans 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. And I don't mean those chapters. I mean chapter 9, verse 10, 11, 12, and 13.

Where this is brought up and this is mentioned. And then everybody lines up with his own distinctive view. You want to hear my view about electing love? Let's talk about predestination.

Let's discuss what is meant by the word hate. Is it hate? Or is it some kind of a lesser love? And that kind of thing. Let's talk about the predestination of the damned.

What does the Bible teach about that? And about God's sovereignty? And about God's justice? And about God's rule? Wonderful fodder for theological bull sessions. But it doesn't do much for the heart that holds in suspicion the love of the Lord. We can't miss God's heart here, brothers.

When you have a fractured heart, when deep in your heart you're tempted to doubt that God loves you anymore, the cure for that is not Calvinism. And it's not Arminianism. And it's not even the discussion of those things.

Now that might be instructive and it certainly is interesting to go through that. But that's not the answer here. It's not the book of Malachi.

It's not what's going on here. Let's look what's going on here. Before I give you the perfect answer, let me tell you another thing it's not.

It's not a theological answer. And it's not some kind of psychological relief that He's giving. He's not saying, look at Esau, look at Edom, somebody worse off than you.

That never did much for me. Sometimes you hear that. I promise you, brothers, if my car dies, it's not going to help me to know two of your cars died.

We get this idea, you know, if somebody else went through that or something worse, maybe you get some kind of psychological relief out of that. If I'm hungry and someone says, well, they're starving, it makes you feel bad and you feel guilty and you go on this guilt trip or something. My leg hurts.

Well, they got an amputation. You know, that's how it's usually put across, that kind of thing. I can't get comfortable in this bed.

My wife reminded me some people are trying to sleep on cardboard in the alleys. Well, it helped for a while. It shut me up.

God's not looking at Esau and Edom and say, now look at somebody worse off than you. That's not the point here. Let me share what I think is the perfect answer.

And since we're in the Old Testament seed form, I'd like to show you the perfect answer in the New Testament fully developed form. Then we'll come back and you'll see that it's so. Before we... You can turn to Romans 8. We're not going to look at it right away.

Let me give you the immediate background of Esau and Edom. Jeremiah had given a dreadful prophecy of Edom. Jeremiah 49, verses 7-22.

He described the day that was coming, a judgment day on Edom. Isaiah does it too in chapter 34. Describes this awful judgment on Edom.

Jeremiah uses words like devastation, stripped bare, destruction. They shall become an object of horror, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah. Desolation.

Isaiah uses phrases like this, Their streams shall become pitch. Their loose earth shall become brimstone. The smoke of their fire shall ascend forever.

Pretty strong words against Edom, against Esau. Now, if you know your Bible history there at the end, don't worry about pinpointing the dates. But, you know, 586, 587.

Babylon came in and took the people of God, Judah, into captivity. You remember that? They weren't just after Judah. That was a world conquest.

That's Nebuchadnezzar. That's Babylon. And after they got Judah, a couple of years later, that was a long war.

And a couple of years later, they got Edom. And those terrible things that Jeremiah said would happen, happened. You know, 70 years later, because of the goodness of the Lord, Judah went back.

They were restored. They recovered. God brought them back.

They built up again. They built the temple. They built the wall.

They built the city. But they could look out the window at the mountains where Edom was, and they never came back. See, you've got to understand, when that was written, and where they were, they were captured at the same time, but they were destroyed.

They never came back. Now, I'm going to ask you to turn to Romans 8, please. How have you loved us? God says, I hated Esau.

I hated Edom. I made his mountains a desolation. I've appointed his inheritance for jackals.

When God said, look at Esau, when God said, look at Edom, He was saying, I believe and I think I can prove it to you. If you doubt My love, if you're tempted to doubt My love, take a good look at someone God hates. Look at your brother.

Look at your twin. Look at your kin. Look at that one, flesh and blood, on whom the wrath of God was poured without mercy, unmitigated anger.

Romans 8, verse 31, please. What shall we say to these things? Brothers, anything there sound like Malachi? What shall we say to these things? But you say, and you know this chapter. You know what Romans 8 is about.

It begins with no condemnation, ends with no separation, and you know what's in between. What a chapter. But you say, what shall we say to these things? And then look, if you would please, at verse 35.

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Does that sound anything like Malachi? It's the same topic. What shall we say to these things? The love of Christ. And what's in between? What shall we say and what shall separate us from the love of Christ? Brothers, look please at Romans 8, verse 32.

He who did not spare his own son, but delivered him over for us all, how will he not with him also? Freely give us all things. I say it reverently, brothers, if you are doubting in any way that God loves you, take a good look at the one God hates. Take a good look at your brother who was hated for your sake.

Hated for my sake. And you'll never doubt that he loves you again. That's what Romans 8 is about.

What shall we say to these things? You say, what things? Verse 18 says, the sufferings of this present age. Verse 28 says, all things, including the devourer. He spared not his own son.

Verse 32, it's almost as if God said, I have my son. I have my elect. I can't spare them both.

If I have something in the house, Lillian says, one of those things has to go. I'm going to keep the one I love the most. I speak as a fool, brothers.

But it almost looks as if he loved you more than he loved his son. Because you were spared. And he wasn't spared.

He spared not his own son. Nothing is going to quiet the whispers of a heart that holds in suspicion the love of God more than looking again at the one on whom God has poured His unmitigated wrath. Look at your brother.

Look at your kin. Look at the one who died in your place. Now tell me, do I love you? You see his point there.

What shall we say to these things? What shall we say to these things? Verse 38 of chapter 8. Paul came to a persuasion at that point. He came to a conviction at that point. I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul came to the conviction that there was nothing in God's universe that could ever come into his life to indicate in the slightest way that God didn't love him. See, that's what that's all about. After what He's done for you on the cross, after what He's done for me on the cross, He spared not His own Son what will ever indicate in my life.

What devourer will ever indicate that God doesn't love me will distress, persecution, peril, sword, famine, nakedness. Verse 37, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. And that's why He said in Malachi, once you see it, you'll say, the Lord be magnified beyond the borders.

Praise God! Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing in the universe can indicate that God doesn't love me anymore. It's the perfect answer.

The perfect answer. Look at Him that God hates. After Paul saw Him, now you can take Him out.

You can beat Him. You can stone Him. And He can be shipwrecked.

And be in all kinds of dangers. Throw Him in a dungeon. Cut His head off.

You're not going to shake His confidence. He saw the Lord. And brothers, sometime we need to take another good look at the cross.

If we get past the cross, we've gone too far. We need to come back. We need to look at that One that took our place.

That was not spared. And then we'll begin to understand that the devourer has not come to devour anything good. We'll praise God for that devourer.

I'm not going to develop this, but what light this sheds on Hebrews 12.6. Whom the Lord loves, He chastens. And every son that He receives, He scourges. You know what that passage teaches? That's

what it says.

You know what it teaches? It teaches as sure as you're loved, you will be disciplined. As sure as you're loved, you'll be scourged. And the devourer is not an indication that He doesn't love you.

The opposite is true. It's an indication that He does love you. Oh, may God open our eyes.

That's how it started in the book of Malachi. That's how it began. They had suspicions the devourer came in, was eating things up, was stripping the land.

And they said, He doesn't care. He doesn't see. He doesn't love me.

He said, If you only knew why I sent that. It's because I do love you. And we need to take a good look, if we ever doubt His love, at one that He's hated.

Your brother. My brother. Our kin.

The Lord Jesus. Habakkuk 2.20. The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all the earth be silent before Him.

Ah, that shuts our mouth. Jude 21. Brothers, keep yourselves in the love of God.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. I'm going to ask you to go back to Malachi, please. I want to just introduce this.

We'll pick it up here later. This inward thought of the heart concerning the work of the Lord. Malachi 1.6-2.9 The secret whisperings of the heart that have to do with His work.

Now, since this heart problem is the longest section in the entire book of Malachi, God gives 18 inspired verses to this one issue. To this murmur of the heart. We're not going to finish it this morning.

I want to begin to introduce it and we'll pick it up here later on. Malachi's method is to dig into the heart and discover the problem. Prove it and then give that perfect answer to that problem.

Let me begin. I told you there's a difference between a symptom and a problem. Because the real problem that we're going to deal with here is so intertwined with the perfect answer.

I can't give you the problem without giving you God's answer. Because God has made them one. As He discovered the answer, the problem came to light.

But let me show you the symptom of the problem. It's not the problem. But this is as much as they could see.

And even that they had a hard time seeing. Let me show you the symptom. And then the next time we get together, I'll show you the real problem tied into God's solution.

And it's a perfect answer. It's always a perfect answer. It's so important, brother.

I hope God helps you to know in your own heart, in your own life, the difference between symptoms and problems. I'll tell you why. Because if you treat the symptom as if the problem is not the problem, then the solution is not the solution.

If you deal with problems that aren't problems, you come up with answers that aren't answers. And then you go in the strength of an answer that's not an answer, and you're more messed up than before you brought the thing to the Lord in the first place. And so we need to see the symptoms.

You know, you get a pain, then that's just a symptom. Don't deal with the pain. Then you find out what's causing that pain.

And then you deal with that. What pain is to the body, the conscience is, the spirit-controlled conscience. And it just tells you something else is wrong.

You don't deal with that. You look in the mirror, you see a mess, you don't deal with the mirror. You've got to deal with the heart.

And that's what the Lord does. Malachi 1.6, a son honors his father, a servant his master. If I'm a father, where's my honor? If I'm a master, where's my respect? Says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests who despise my name.

And then 2.7 again, the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth. In the context, this problem, this heart problem, he's addressing priests. And so you would say, well, those are those who were in full-time ministry, full-time Christian service.

And so there must be a special application to elders and to missionaries and to Sunday school teachers and to evangelists and so on. Those who are in full-time Christian service. I could let you get away with that, except for the full light of revelation, which reminds us, 1 Peter 2.9, that we are, thank you, we are all priests.

And so wither with me under this passage. Every Christian is a priest. Every Christian has in his hand some redemptive work of the Lord.

And though he addresses the priests, he's not limiting it to those who have some kind of a vocation. He's talking to every believer. Those who handle the truth of God and the things of God.

Now, it may apply to you if you're teaching a Sunday school class or have some kind of a jail ministry or visiting the sick or have some kind of a ministry. There may be a special application. But every priest is vulnerable to this second heart whisperer.

Oh, may God help us. Let me give you the symptom. Let me show you the symptom.

It has to do with priests. It has to do with the work of God. It has to do with service, ministry unto the Lord.

Chapter 1, verse 6, God begins in His probe to touch the attitudes of the priest. A son honors his father. A servant his master.

Where's my honor? Where's my respect? Of course, they deny that. We've been honoring you. We've been respecting you.

Then He says, verse 6, you despise My name. Ho, ho, ho, wait now. You've gone too far.

I may not show all the reverence, but I don't despise your name. Don't just read this la, la, la. Understand the shock when God comes to these priests.

These are priests. They're ministering unto the Lord. And He comes and He says, you despise My name.

They are shocked. They're blown over. God has kicked them in the stomach and He's knocked the wind out of them.

They can't believe that He's saying that. Verse 7, you're presenting defiled food on My altar. They say, how have we defiled you? I don't remember bringing any moldy bread to the table.

I don't remember this. What are you saying to Me? And we just sort of read this, I say, you say, I say, you say. This is an amazing revelation to them.

And they deny it. Defiled food, despising your name. Verse 12, you're profaning it in that you say the table of the Lord is defiled, and as for its fruit, its food is to be despised.

Picture those priests. When they hear this word from God, they are absolutely flabbergasted. Don't make the mistake thinking here the table of the Lord in our vocabulary is breaking bread.

That's not the table He's talking about. Actually, it's not even the table of showbread, though there's some possibility it might be that. He's talking here, verse 7, you're offering defiled food on My altar.

The table of the Lord back then was the altar. Read Leviticus 21. Five times the sacrifice, the burnt offering is called the food of God.

That's what He eats. That's what He feeds on. The food of God.

It gives you a little hint where we're heading when we get the answer. What is this attitude that they had? Way down deep, you despise My name. My table is defiled.

The sacrifice is polluted, defiled. And then digging deeper, He says, verse 13, you also say, My, how tiresome it is. And you disdainfully sniff at it.

Here's the symptoms, brother. These priests, and you've got to enter in. I hope God helps you get into the shoes of some of these Bible characters when you study.

Again, we just sort of read this thing, la, la, la. Now, these priests, they had quite a job. They had quite a job.

And it was quite fatiguing. And the pay wasn't that great. And so they had to get up, you know, at 9 in the morning every day and 3 in the afternoon and slay the sacrifice.

And they had to inspect the sacrifice. And they had to get the fire ready and put it on the altar. And then they had to take the ashes away.

And they had to make sure the wood was there. And when they kindled the fire, they had to trim the candles and prepare the table and get the incense and cut it all up and then clean it up afterwards and get ready to do it again. That's alright for a while.

But then the next day, oh, time to make the donuts. And it's time to get the lamb. Here they come again.

And you've got to do it again. And after a while, the work of God became a burden. That's the symptom.

That's not the problem. And they started getting tired. And they began to sniff at it.

And they got weary. And they denied it. Lord, that would never happen to us.

That's the secret attitude of the heart. They said, that would never, never happen to us. Brothers, let me tell you this.

It will always happen, apart from the grace of God. It will always happen. And way down in the heart, they began to murmur and complain of the work of God that had become routine.

The work of God that had become weariness. It had become a burden. And they got sick and tired of it because it kept on keeping up.

And every day, and every morning, and every night, and the next day, and here it is again, and again, and again, and again. Don't answer, just think. Down in the heart, that's the symptom.

Are you getting tired of serving the Lord? You say, oh no, Sunday already? I've got to prepare that lesson. The phone rings. Oh, I hope it's not brother so-and-so.

That guy can't get things straight. I hope sister so-and-so doesn't need another. I have to go back over there.

And after a while, you get tired. You get weary. Something happened to the work of the Lord.

And the note of joy is gone. It didn't touch the problem. That's just a symptom.

When his burden is not easy, his yoke is not easy, his burden is not light, and the joy is gone, the thrill, it's just the service of the Lord. What happened? God says, I have a burden. That might be only a whisper in your heart, but it sounds like a thousand thunders in Mine, says the Lord.

I'm burdened. I'm grieved. Something's wrong.

As he hears his people, he says, you've been saying, I never said that. And that saying, I know you've been saying it, and the indication is that you're so tired of doing my work and working. It's a weariness to you.

You sniff at it. You say, that's not that serious, is it? It means you despise my name. It means you despise my table.

It means you despise what is offered on my table. And they're left there shocked. Brothers, they need a word.

We need a word. God did not take them to that chair just to fillet them and to rip them open and make them feel bad. Malachi is not a book of bad news.

It's a book of glorious news. It's a book of great news. He doesn't want you doubting His love.

And so he says, look to Jesus. Look at the one that was hated for your sake, and you'll never doubt my love again. He doesn't want you weary of His ministry and His service.

He says, and I'm not telling you now. We'll look at that later. But He gives us a perfect answer.

A perfect answer. And then He moves on. You've got a problem with My people.

And you've got a problem with My ways. And you've taken My faithfulness for granted. And you've let go of My glory.

All of those whispers, He says we've got to deal with them. And in each case, He gives a perfect answer. Well, we'll stop there.

Let's pray. Father, thank You so much for this book. We pray, Lord, that You would search our hearts, that we might have Your heart on all of these issues.

Deliver us, we pray, from constantly denying that these things are so. Teach us to embrace Christ as our answer. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen.

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