

Messenger!

A Journey Through the Prophecy of Malachi

Malachi 1:1-5

2- The Sovereignty of God in the Distribution of His Love, Part 1

June 22, 2019

Malachi 1:1-5

1 The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi.

2 "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;

3 but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."

4 Though Edom says, "We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins"; thus says the Lord of hosts, "They may build, but I will tear down; and *men* will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever."

5 Your eyes will see this and you will say, "The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!"

To the Glory of God

Now there has been a lot said and written throughout the 2,000-year history of the Christian Church about God being "Sovereign". But just what does that *mean*? During almost 48 years of my journey with Jesus, I have never met the first person, in *any* church I may have been, that did NOT believe that God was "Sovereign". *Everybody* says they believe this. But exactly what do we *mean* when we say, "God is Sovereign"? And how does God being "Sovereign" effect everything else? I think the *best* place to start is with a "progression of logic" that goes something like this:

- God is *Sovereign*
- God is *absolutely* Sovereign

- God is absolutely Sovereign, *over everything*
- God is absolutely Sovereign over everything, *all the time*

... which is actually saying the same thing. Because if God is Sovereign *at all*, if God is Sovereign *to any degree*, then He is *absolutely* Sovereign.

Now the word "Sovereign" as used in this case means: *someone who has supreme Power and/or Authority*. This word also means: *someone who is greatest in degree in both Power and Worth*. But we must then recognize that "Sovereignty" does NOT mean that God can "do anything". He *can't*. God's Power and Ability is always "in accord" with His Character and Nature. So, God CANNOT "think" or "do" *contrary* to His Own pristine Perfections. So, for example, in **Titus 1:2b**, the Apostle Paul tells us:

... God... cannot lie...

Now this doesn't say that God *should not* lie, or that God *doesn't want* to lie, but that God CANNOT lie. The one, true, and living God of the Bible *does not* have the Ability or the Power to lie. Likewise, God CANNOT be deceived, He CANNOT be tempted with Evil, and He CANNOT do anything that is contrary to His Will. So, when you put all this together, you see that God is:

The One Being, Who is the greatest in all the Universe, in both Power and Worth, and the One Who possesses supreme Power and Authority to secure His Will.

... which is *why* we worship Him.

But by adding the word "*absolutely*" before the word, "Sovereign", we mean to say that God is *totally* Sovereign or *completely* Sovereign. Then when we add the phrase "*over everything*" after the word "Sovereign", we mean to say that there isn't *anything* in all of God's Creation that God does NOT have total and complete Power and Authority over. *And that includes satan and the evil choices of wicked men.* God is *absolutely* Sovereign over them, too.

But then we also have to add that God is also "Sovereign" over the Good and Kind and Beautiful things, like Love and Grace and Mercy,

and the *distribution* of Love, Grace, and Mercy. So, "Sovereignty" extends to all that God does in the created Universe.

And finally, when we add the phrase "*all the time*" at the end of our definition, we mean to say that there is no point of time, no season, no moment, when God does not possess *total* and *complete* Power and Authority over everything else in all of Creation.

Now it is important to know that the Bible teaches that God's Sovereignty is "Inherent". And what we mean by "Inherent" is that God's Sovereignty is *not* something *external* to Himself that He saw, and wanted, and then either fought for or purchased, and now has. No, God's Sovereignty comes from "*Who God is*". In other words, God's absolute Power and Authority over everything, all the time, derives from His Own Personal Character and Nature. So, as long as God has been God, He has been Sovereign. And as long as God will be God, He will be Sovereign. So, part of what it means for God to be "God" is that He is Sovereign.

Now I would suggest to you that there isn't a dime's worth of difference in saying "God is Sovereign" than there is in saying "God is absolutely Sovereign over everything, all the time". Because if God is Sovereign at all, He is *absolutely* Sovereign. And if God is Sovereign at all, He is Sovereign *over everything else*, and if God is Sovereign at all, He is Sovereign over everything, *all the time*. So, the progression of logic doesn't *change* the definition, it simply helps us to understand it better.

Now, one of the most important *practical applications* of the irrefutable Truth that God is "Sovereign" is that there is no such thing as "Chance" or "Accidents" or "Fate" or "Things that just happen". *Nothing* "just happens". *Nothing* is "random" or "accidental". *Nothing*, in all of the created Universe, "happens" by itself.

The Bible teaches that God, all by Himself, decrees certain things to happen. And that means that God counsels *with Himself* in the perfect Wisdom of the *tri-unity* of His Persons, and *determines* that certain things need to happen. And that can be anything as distant as a galaxy being born or something as close as you getting a raise on your job. But this also includes things we call "Bad", like hating Esau, and things we call "Good", like loving Jacob. God, in His absolute Sovereignty *decrees* certain things to happen.

And a lot of people understand and agree with this. But then they get completely *inconsistent* with the definition of "Sovereignty", and they go about to *limit* the *application* of His absolute Sovereignty by saying that "God simply "knew" about what is going to happen in the future. And they are *partially* correct. Because the Bible teaches that God is "Omniscient". And that is a "three-dollar" word that means that "God knows *everything* about *everything*". So, God being "Omniscient" means that He never learns new things, He never wonders, He never guesses. God knows. Everything. About everything. All the time. So, in that sense yes, God "knows" what will happen in the future.

But God being "Sovereign" means that God does *much more* than just "know" about the future. "Sovereignty" means that God *controls* the future. So, whatever God has *decreed* to happen, at some point in the future, He works unendingly to "raise up or cast down", "to build or to tear apart", "to move or to push everything and everybody", so that *whatever* He has decreed comes to pass, *exactly* as He has decreed. Another way of saying this is that whatever God "wills", He "does". Whatever He "wants", He "gets". Whatever He has "determined" to do, He "does". Always. And because He is Sovereign, *nothing* can defeat God or what God has decreed to happen. Nothing.

Now that is easy to believe when discussing things that are "Good", like Miracles or Salvation or Creation or God loving Jacob. But we just spent 55 Lord's Days examining what the Apostle Peter wrote in **1 Peter**. And what Peter told us is that God *cannot* be defeated by satan. Neither God nor His Will can be defeated by evil men, nor by our many bad decisions, nor by war, nor by Governments and not by the wicked decisions of evil rulers. God's Will is utterly invincible and always comes to pass, *exactly* as God has established it. And that includes hard things like the Suffering of godly people. But it also includes hard sayings like when God said "Esau I hate".

Now there are several examples of how God always causes His Decrees to come to pass exactly as He has determined them to be, but one of the most widely read one has to do with the time that God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac back in **Genesis 22:1-14**, please go there with me:

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take now your son,

your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance.

Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you." Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked on together. Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together. Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind *him* a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

Now the word "Providence" is an amazing word, even though it is rarely used or discussed much anymore. And that is a shame because understanding this word will give us a better comprehension of how God causes His Decrees to come to pass, exactly as He has determined throughout His Creation. The English word "Providence" comes from the Latin word "provide", which has two parts:

1. "*Pro*" (Latin: "forward" or "on behalf of")
2. "*Vide*" (Latin: "to see")

So, on a shallow reading, many people think that "provide" would mean: to see forward or to foresee. But, "Pro-vide" (Latin: *pro-veeday*)

actually means: *to supply what is needed; to give sustenance or support.* And so, the noun "Providence" means: *the sovereign Act of God in providing for or sustaining and governing the Universe.* And there are two reasons for this:

1. Linguistically
2. Theologically

A. Linguistically

Linguistically, "pro" not only means: *forward*, but it also means: *on behalf of*. So, the word "pro-vide" actually means: *to see on behalf of*. But what sense does that make? The way this is used *linguistically* in English is when someone says: "*I'll see to that.*" And when used this way, the phrase "see to" doesn't have anything to do with vision, per se, it actually means: *to take care of or to provide for*. So, when someone says, "*I'll see to that*", they are *not* talking about literally "seeing" something with their eyes, but they mean to say, "*I'll provide for that*", or "*I'll take care of that*".

In other words, they are "seeing" something with a specific purpose in mind. And that "seeing with a purpose in mind" results in specific action being taken. So, "to provide" then is to "make provision for what you see". "Seeing to" something is "acting on behalf of something". And that is "providing." Therefore, "Providence" is the sovereign Act of God "seeing to" the various Decrees that He has determined throughout the entire Universe. And the Holy Bible teaches that for everything that God has determined will happen, God will "take care of that". He will "see to it".

B. Theologically

But when we move into Theology, there is also a reason to understand that "seeing to" something means "providing for". For example, in **Genesis 22:7b**, when Abraham was told to sacrifice his son Isaac, *before* they went up the mountain, young Isaac asked his father:

... where is the lamb for the burnt offering?

...and Abraham replied "in faith":

Genesis 22:8b

... God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.

... and not long after Abraham made that statement, God proved His Faithfulness and showed Abraham a ram caught in the thorns (**Genesis 22:14**). And in response to this Sovereign Provision:

Genesis 22:14b

... Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah (Yahweh) -jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. (KJV)

Genesis 22:14

Abraham called the name of that place The Lord (Yahweh) Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided." (NASB)

Now the Name "Jehovah" in this verse is actually the Covenant Name of God (Yahweh) that is used 6,825 times in the Old Testament. But the Hebrew word "jireh" used in this verse is a proper noun which, when added to "YHWH", literally means: *the Lord will see to it.*¹ So, literally, Abraham relied to his young son:

"God *will see* for Himself the lamb."

Now why does God's "seeing" in Hebrew mean that He will "provide"? We can find the answer in one of the Characteristics of God that is called "*Omniscience*". And this part of God's Nature is what allows for God to "know everything about everything", past, present, and future. So, it is true to say that the God of the Bible "sees" and "understands" the future fully, before it happens.

But God is much more than totally Omniscient. In addition to being completely Omniscient, the Bible declares clearly and repeatedly that God is also *Effectual*, meaning that God doesn't simply passively *understand* what will happen in the future, but God also *orders*, *controls*, and *governs* all of the thoughts, and all of the actions, and all of the decisions, of all the people in the earth, past, present, and future,

¹ The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament Copyright © 2003 by AMG Publishers.

to such an extent that He *guarantees* that His Perfect Will is brought forth. And this "ordering" and "controlling" of all things is called "God's Providence".

So, because of the *combination* of both God's Omniscience and His Effectualness, God never simply "sees" without "acting". God doesn't simply "know" on an intellectual level, that something will occur at some point in the future, while He sits back passively allowing Man to struggle to try to obtain God's Will. The Bible does not teach that. The Bible teaches that God actively *controls* and *orders* and *governs* all of the circumstances and all of the situations (including Man's choices and actions and desires) in such a way that two things will always be true:

1. Man will be held completely responsible for all of his thoughts, words, decisions, and actions, and will be judged if he does not do the "right" thing.
2. That which God has determined (from before the foundation of the world) will happen, *exactly* as God has ordained it.

... and *both* of these two things will be carried out in such a way that God will be Glorified, and the Joy of all of God's people will be made full! So, God, *always* and *in all cases*, remains absolutely Sovereign, and Man is, *always* and *in all cases*, responsible for what he does.

And that means that every "Good" thing that occurs is because God *sovereignly* and *actively CAUSED* it to happen. And, therefore, He receives all Glory for that. And every "Evil" thing that occurs is because God *sovereignly* and *passively* stepped aside and *ALLOWED* sinful people to do what was already in their hearts anyway. And all God did was to *not stop* them. And that allows for all evil people to be totally *responsible* for whatever they did.

Now because God is Sovereign, He *could* have intervened and inserted Himself into that situation and God *could* have stopped them. And sometimes God does just that. For example, People get mad and they get into a car to go to someone's house to hurt them or kill them. But on the way, they have a "change of heart" or a "change of mind", and they don't kill them. That is an example of God sovereignly *intervening* to stop that particular Act of Evil from ever happening.

And God does that 10,000 times every day. He *personally* intervenes and either *limits* the Evil or stops it outright. But there are

other times that it is God's Will for a particular Act of Evil to happen. And the reason a perfectly Righteous God would want an Evil Act to happen is so that, by allowing that Evil to occur, a greater Good will result that would *not* happen if that Act of Evil did not occur.

Now on those occasions, God doesn't *force* anyone to do Evil. People *voluntarily* choose to do things that are Evil. And in those cases, even though God was certainly able to limit them or stop them, there are times that God passively steps aside and allows Evil people to carry out the Evil that is already in their own hearts to do.

And this is true whether we are talking about the Salvation of unworthy sinners by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone (through the evil betrayal of Judas Iscariot), or the evil thoughts and actions of unrepentant people. And this is how we must understand God loving Jacob and, yet, hating Esau.

We must remember as we strive to comprehend all of God's Characteristics that the one true living God of the Bible is *not* a "passive Observer" in the Universe. That concept of God is an ancient heresy called "Deism", and is neither Biblical nor Christian. The created Universe can neither exist at all nor could it continue to function without God actively and continually *sustaining* and *maintaining* it. And so, wherever God is "looking and seeing", God is "acting". If God perceives, He performs; If He inspects, He effects; and where He patrols, He controls.

In other words, there is a profound and very wise and important Biblical reason why "Providence" does *not* merely mean: *foreknowledge*, but means: *the active and determined Sustenance and Governance of the Universe*. So, every time God "sees", He "sees to it". In other words, God's "seeing" is *always* with a view to Him "doing". And God's "doing" *always* has, as its final and supreme Objective, that His Will be done and that He is glorified.

So, when we say that God exercises His absolute Sovereignty through the ongoing Ordering and Governance of the Universe, we mean to say that *the single most important Objective in all of God's Creation is that His Will is accomplished*, not merely *desired*. And that will *always*, and *in all cases*, result in God alone being glorified.

And *nowhere* is this Reality made more clear than with the Love of God and the *distribution* of that Love. Truly, the Love of God is one of the most cherished and valued parts of God's Nature. We sing about

God's Love and we rejoice in it and we celebrate the Love of God almost more than anything else. And, rightly so. It is truly a marvel that the God, Who is utmost in His Power and in His Glory and in His Ability and Authority, is also the God Who excels at Love. No one in all the Universe loves more than God loves. Human love, in all of its magnitude, pales in comparison to the Love of God.

And yet, as we read the Bible, we see that God didn't distribute His Love to everyone in equal amounts. Right here, in the Passage that Brother Vern just read to us, we read this:

... I have loved Jacob... but I have hated Esau ...

So, you have two brothers, the Bible says they were twins, born by the same mother, born into the same family, at the same time, and, yet, God says He "loves" one of them and "hates" the other one. And it is important to know that God did this *before* they were born, and *before* they did anything "Good" or "Evil", because that tells us that God was *not* responding to something that either Jacob or Esau did. No, before these men did *anything*, before they ever uttered a single word, before they were even born, God exercised His absolute Sovereignty and said:

Genesis 25:23b

... the older shall serve the younger.

... which was unheard of in that Culture. So, here God manifested His absolute Sovereignty by *interrupting* the normal flow of how the "first-born male" in the family is traditionally treated, and God *imposed* His Divine Will on this family by issuing a Decree that the older son will live in service to the younger son!

Now any way you slice this or dice it, this is a big deal. This changed History. And, many hundreds of years later, when the Apostle Paul was discussing why *some* people are saved and others are not, in **Romans 9**, he used this very example and this very quote by Malachi to teach what has since been called "Sovereign Election".

So, *why* would God do this? We must agree that this goes way beyond God simply "knowing" about the future. This is God *inserting* Himself into the life of this family (and by extension the entire Human

Race) and *altering* the future to suit His Will! This is God *fashioning* and *shaping* the future to coincide with His Divine Decree!

And I want you to see that God didn't discuss this with anybody ahead of time. He didn't consult with Jacob and Esau's parents; He didn't ask *anybody* what they thought about this. And, also, please notice that God didn't seek anybody to approve of what He did. God simply acted as though He owns everything, and he then moved, *sovereignly*, to accomplish what He thought was important. And then He expects everybody else to come into alignment with Him!

Now we can guess as to why God did this. And we can offer all kinds of *speculation* as to *why* God did what He did here. But I have learned that human speculation is about like arm-pits, we all have a couple of them, and they both stink. Because we really don't even have to try to guess or speculate *why* God did this, because this is one of those rare examples when God actually tells us *why* He did something.

So, *why* did God Himself say was the reason *why* He exercised His Own absolute Sovereignty by *interrupting* the normal flow of the Culture of this family, and why He *inserted* Himself into this situation to change the course of History by saying that the older son would serve the younger son?

Malachi 1:2b&3a

... I have loved Jacob... but I have hated Esau ...

... and this simple but profound Statement by God that was infallibly written down by the Prophet Malachi immediately raises some very serious Questions that deserve to be answered like:

- ✓ I thought God loved everybody?
- ✓ Why did God hate Esau?
- ✓ Why did God love Jacob?
- ✓ Does God have the "Right" to distribute His Love like this?
- ✓ Does God loving one and hating the other make God to be a monster?

... and, whereas I realize that most of the astonishment will center around the fact that God says He *hated* Esau, what should *really* astonish us is the fact that God *loved* Jacob! Why would a perfect Deity

love a man, who conspired with his mother, to steal his own brother's Inheritance by lying to his blind and dying father? Why would God "set His Love" on a man like that?

And this tells us that we have a lot to learn about what the Bible teaches about both God's Love and His Hatred. For example, the Apostle John tells us about the extent of God's Love when he wrote this in **John 3:16**:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

... and most people conclude from what Jesus said here that God "loves everybody". And we're just fine with that definition, and we're able to invent our own designer theology, until we read here in **Malachi 1:3a** that God hated Esau.

So, we need more information. And, thanks be to God, He gave us more information. So, as God the Holy Spirit moved along the Apostle John to write his first Epistle, he went into much greater detail about God and His Love, when he wrote this in **1 John 4:7-11**:

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Now, over the years, this Passage has been greatly distorted, and so, the true meaning of this Passage has become very cloudy to many people. When John said in verse 7:

... everyone who loves is born of God and knows God....

... John was NOT talking about *any kind* of Love. No, the *context* of this Passage is about the relationship that Love has with God. And it is the *kind* of Love that the Bible often describes in two parts:

1. Love for God
2. Love for people

... so, this is NOT about the *kind* of love that people have for their cats or for a sports team. It is NOT the kind of "patriotic love" that people have for their countries. In reality, John was NOT even talking about the kind of love that Brothers and Sisters have with each other, or for the kind of love between Parents and Children. And John was also NOT describing the kind of intimate love between Husband and Wife.

So, this was NOT describing a person who is inherently "loving" in his own power and strength. John was describing the "Gift of Love" that God graciously gives to His people that *empowers* and *enables* them to love Him! Look again at what John said:

Beloved, let us love one another...

So, John begins this section of his inspired Letter by giving an Apostolic Command that those who are the "**beloved**" should love all the other ones who are also "**beloved**". So, in Alabama English, John is telling the believers that all saved people should love all the other saved people. But why? He goes on to say...

... for love is from God...

So, John says, that the Reason behind WHY all saved people should love all the other saved people is because this KIND of love is "**from**" God, it comes **FROM** God. And that means that the KIND of Love, whereby all truly redeemed people genuinely love all the other truly redeemed people, does NOT *originate* from us. It is NOT already *inherent* within us. So, this is NOT a human form of Love. This is NOT a form of Love that a person can "work up" or "create" or "manufacture". This KIND of Love comes **FROM** God, meaning it is a Gift from God to all who are saved.

But as a human being, made in the Image of God, I already possess a *form* of love. And so, for example, I don't need to be "born again" to love my Wife. I don't need Jesus to live and die and rise again in order to love my natural brother, or the Dallas Cowboys, or macaroni and cheese, or to love my country. I have the capacity to love many things *without* God, *without* Grace, *without* the Spirit of God abiding in me, and *without* the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. And I can *sing*

about that manifestation of love, and I can *rejoice* in it, and *celebrate* it, and *write poems* about it, and even *make movies* about it.

And this human type of Love can even express itself in what are normally called "spiritual things". So, "in and of myself", *without* being saved, and *without* experiencing the Miracle of the new Birth, I can "love" to go to Church, I can "love" to hear Sermons, and I can "love" to sing Hymns. I can "love" the dignity and the pomp and the *religiosity* about "christian rituals".

But, I can't *love* God, in and of myself. As a lost and fallen person, I do NOT have the *capacity* or even the *desire* to love God, I can't *treasure* Jesus, I can't *enjoy* God, and I can't *delight* myself in the risen Lamb. In my fallen state, I have no desire to *long after* Jesus or *desire* to be near Him, and I cannot find *the fullness of my Joy* in obeying His Commandments unless and until God gives me that Gift.

But *why?* *Why* can't I just decide to love God? I make decisions all day long. I can decide to buy a blue car, I can decide to go to Harvard, I can decide to shop at Winn Dixie, and I can even decide who to marry and how many children I want. So, why can't I simply "make a decision" to love God? Because, I am fallen. And NOT loving God is part of what it means to be "fallen" and "lost". Here is what Moses wrote about what it means to be fallen from **Genesis 6:5:**

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

This says that, after the Fall, the *pervasiveness* of "human wickedness" spread to every area of the Universe. *Nothing* was left intact after Adam sinned. *Everything* changed. The dirt changed and now produces thorns and thistles. The Galaxies changed and now stars die. Even the nature of animals was radically altered to where now animals are brutal toward each other and tear each other apart. But look closely at the last phrase:

... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually

... Moses says here that lost people are "all Evil, all the time". So, there is no *capacity* within the fallen human heart that would allow anyone to suddenly begin to love God. There is no longer any area of Humanity

that would allow a heart that now loves to lie, and that loves to steal, and that loves to deceive, and that loves to be selfish to simply "choose" to love God. So, unless and until God sovereignly comes to the lost person, *in his lost state*, and *sovereignly and graciously* (forcefully) opens his eyes, unstops his deaf ears, and gives him a heart to believe, *nobody* would ever become convicted, *nobody* would ever repent, and *nobody* would be saved.

So, while lost people can be polite and thoughtful and soft-spoken and gentle and considerate of others in their lost condition, they are *unable* to love God. And they are *unable* to love God because, in their fallen state, they don't *want to*. Now look what John said next:

... and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God...

So, one of the fruits that *prove* that an individual has experienced the Miracle of the New Birth is that they have been given this Gift of "Love for God", and because of that, they now love all those whom God has saved.

1 John 4:11

Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

So, our human *response* to the Gift of Love that God grants to us for Himself is that we now love all the others, who have also experienced that same Gift. Now we need to remember that, back in the 1st Century, when this was written, you had Jews who had been taught all their lives that the Gentiles were dirty and wicked people, and yet now, because of the Grace of God, a saved Gentile was sitting next to a saved Jew in church loving and worshipping Jesus Christ!

So, the big obstacle back then was the inherent "Division" between people. Back then, people were divided by different Races and Cultures, between the Poor and the Rich, between Male and Female, between Old and Young, between the Educated and the Uneducated, and between the "Clean" and the "Unclean". Sort of like you see many times in the modern, American church of our day, after 2,000 years!

Even in Jesus' Own small group of Apostles, you had, on the one hand, the Apostle Levi (Matthew), who was a despised tax collector, who, before he was saved, had betrayed his own people and bought a

license to impose *horrendous* taxes on his fellow Jews. And on the other hand, you had the Apostle Simon, who was called "Simon- the Zealot", who, before he was saved, had belonged to a terrorist organization and who, before his conversion, would have tortured and killed a man like Levi. And yet, because of this amazing Gift of Love, there is not a single hint, anywhere in the New Testament, that Levi and Simon even had a quarrel between them!

And I would suggest that one of the best statements in the entire Bible that summarizes what I have been talking about is found in **1 John 4:19** that says:

We love; because He first loved us

... and, of course, the context here is loving God and loving each other. So, John says here that the *Reason*, the *Source*, the *Catalyst*, the *Origination* of our Love for God is *not* some choice we made or some decision we made, but rather God's Love for us. So, here is the progression of logic for this verse:

- The "we" here is saved people.
- So, do saved people love God?
- Yes.
- How many saved people love God?
- *All* of them.
- *Why* do saved people love God?
- Because God first loved them.
- So, saved people didn't originate or initiate this Love for God?
- No. We were *incapable* and *unwilling* to love God- until God gave us this Gift of Love for Himself.
- But *why* were saved people incapable of loving God?
- Because we are fallen.
- So, this Love for God was given to us?
- Yes, our Love for God is a Gift *from* God.
- So, loving God is what Salvation is really all about?
- Yes.
- Do lost people love God?
- No.
- Why?

- Why?
- Why?

... and sooner or later, you have to come to the conclusion that the only Reason that lost people do *not* love God is because God has NOT given them this Gift of Love for Himself (at least not yet). Because if it is true that the only Reason saved people love God is because God has graciously given them this Gift of Love for Himself to them, then the only Reason that lost people do NOT love God is because God has *not* given them this Gift. At least, not yet. And the proof that this is true lies in the fact that if God had given them this Gift, they would respond by loving God, like we do.

So, the fact that they do *not* love God, the fact that they do *not delight* themselves in God, because they do *not* treasure Jesus Christ, because they find no Joy in loving and obeying God, these are the things that *prove* that God has not given them this Gift of Love. At least, not yet.

And if God ever does give them this Gift, everybody will know it, because they will begin to love God and they will begin to love all the others who are saved, just like we do. So, it is the *absence* of this Gift of Love that determines who is saved and who is not. All saved people love God. And all saved people love the "things of the Spirit of God"². All saved people love each other, and they even love their enemies! While lost people love only "Sin" and "Self".

So, it is "Love", Love for God and Love for the brethren, that determines if our "Salvation Experience" is genuine or not. Those, who have truly experienced the Miracle of the New Birth *respond* to that by loving God and loving each other.

Now our love for God and our love for each other is certainly NOT perfect, it isn't without fault, or failure, but it is *honest*, it is *real*, and it is *true*. And what is amazing is that this Love GROWS in us over time so that those who have been saved for a long time love God and love each other MORE, and *more perfectly*, than those who have only recently been saved.

Now one of the conclusions that we must make about this is *exactly* what Malachi addresses in verses 2&3 when he said:

² The "things of the Spirit of God" are those things that come from God the Holy Spirit- like Prayer; and Bible Study; and godly Fellowship; and the Sacraments; and Fasting; and Service. These things are also called, the various "Means of Grace"

"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 have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."

Now Malachi prophesies a very uncomfortable thing here. God the Holy Spirit "moved along" this Old Testament Prophet, the very *last* Old Testament Prophet, to tell us something that shook Israel down to its very core:

... I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau...

And the rest of this Sermon and the Sermon next time will seek to answer two Questions about this infallible Statement:

1. *Why* did God "love" Jacob?
2. *Why* did God "hate" Esau?

... and even though most people are going to concentrate on the fact that the Holy Bible says that God "hated" Esau, I would suggest that the amazing thing is that He "loved" Jacob.

But right off the bat, based on this Statement, we can no longer agree with what is commonly taught about God that "God loves everybody". The Bible says that God *hated* Esau. So, there was at least one person whom God hated. And so, when we read the first part of **John 3:16**, that says:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son...

... we now know that this does NOT mean that God loved everybody in the world. **Malachi 1:3a** tells us that God did NOT (and does NOT) love everybody in the world. It says God hated Esau.

Now I realize that many people have never heard this before, but I beg you to remember that I didn't write this, Malachi did. And this is either part of the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of the living God, or I can't trust what any of it says. If the Bible is not true *in part*, then it isn't true *in whole* either. And if we are going to attack or

discount or ignore or marginalize or change what the Bible says about things that are deep and profound and complicated, then we have no basis to embrace and quote and enjoy what the Bible says about things that are easy and simple and common. So, please do not say, "*Brother Blair doesn't believe that God loves everybody*". Instead, please say, "*The Bible says that God hated Esau and Brother Blair believes the Bible is the Word of God*".

Now since there is absolutely no doubt that the Bible absolutely says that God "hated" Esau, we must now try to understand what it means by what it says. And I want to tell you, in advance, how I'll do that. It will be in four simple steps:

- Step 1) Find out what the original Hebrew word that Malachi wrote here, that was translated into English as "Hate", actually means.
- Step 2) Find out WHY God hated Esau, and WHY He loved Jacob.
- Step 3) Find out if this Old Testament Truth was carried over into the infinitely superior New Testament.
- Step 4) Find out how this impacts us today.

Now as we go through these steps, I will point out certain Realities to you about God and His Nature, about the concept of the "Love of God", and about Salvation that some of you may have never thought about before. But, as always, what I will tell you will be fully backed up with sacred Scripture, and NOT my own logic or wisdom.

Also, as we go through this, I will tell you that some of you may get very insulted, or offended, or even become angry with me. All I ask of you is that you give me the benefit of the doubt, and if you have Questions that this Sermon mini-series doesn't answer, I will be happy to spend time with you and answer all your Questions.

But I want to say one more thing. I don't "have a dog in this hunt". I am not trying to "fit in" with anybody's Doctrine or Theological positions. I'm not following John Calvin or Martin Luther or Jonathan Edwards. I am following Jesus. I'm not trying to be controversial or draw attention to myself by saying things that are designed to invoke an emotional response from you. I don't do that. I am simply going verse-by-verse through the **Book of Malachi**, and I am honestly and sincerely and truthfully trying to understand what Malachi wrote. And I'm doing this so that I may see Jesus more clearly, worship Him more

fully, obey Him from the heart, and equip you to walk this world in white. That's it.

So, if the Truth about what Malachi wrote here sits well with you, then praise God! But if what Malachi wrote here does NOT sit well with you, then what Malachi said is still true, and wherever you find yourself at odds with this Book is an area you need to change. Okay. Here we go.

Step 1) What does the original Hebrew word that was translated into English here as "Hate" mean?

The original Hebrew word that Malachi used here is a word³ that means: *to hate*. So, this Word means *exactly* what the English translation says. God *hated* Esau. Another way of understanding this is to say, God did NOT *love* Esau.

But God doesn't "hate" like humans do. And He also doesn't love like we do, either. Neither God's "Love" nor His "Hate" can be defined in human terms. So, the best way to understand God's Love is NOT to look at a mother with her child. It is NOT to look at a father with his son. And, conversely, to understand God's Hatred, we *cannot* look at a person who hates another person. We have to allow the Bible to define both God's Love and God's Hate.

And when we do that, we see that, clearly and repeatedly, the Bible affirms that "God loves everybody". And yet, Malachi says that God *hated* Esau. So, what do we do with this? We seek to ask the Question, "In what WAY did God love Jacob and in what WAY did God hate Esau?"

And so, as we study Esau's life in the **Book of Genesis**, we see that God "loved" Esau in many ways:

- ✓ Esau was born into an honorable family (**Genesis 25:25**).
- ✓ Esau was a skillful hunter (**Genesis 25:27**).
- ✓ Esau had loving wives (**Genesis 26:34; 28:9**).
- ✓ Esau had many children (**Genesis 33:5; 36:1-19**).
- ✓ Esau became wealthy (**Genesis 32:6; 33:6&9; Deuteronomy 2:5**).

³ Hebrew, וָנַחֲשׁו sane

... so, in many, many ways, the *general* Love of God toward all Mankind was present in Esau's life. God was Kind and Good and Merciful to Esau in a thousand different ways. So, in what WAY did God "hate" Esau? God loved Esau **LESS** than He loved Jacob. And God loved Esau less by NOT *interrupting* his life, by NOT *inserting* Himself into Esau's heart, and by NOT *intervening* in Esau's mind to change him and to CAUSE Esau to love God. God did not give Esau the "Gift of Love" that would have allowed him to love God and to love all those whom God loves.

In other words, God "hated" Esau by *leaving him to himself*, and by God NOT imposing Himself onto Esau. God left Esau alone. So, God allowed Esau to "be" and to "do" whatever Esau truly wanted to "be" and "do". God didn't *force* Esau to sin, and to hate God, and to hate the people of God. Esau *hated* Jacob *all by himself*. Esau *desired* to rebel *all by himself*. Esau *despised his birthright* and *chose* to rebel against his family. All God did was to "step aside" and sovereignly *allow* Esau to do whatever was in his heart to do. And God decreed that it was His Will to NOT interrupt Esau or stop him.

Now in a normal setting, this would not classify as "Hate". God allowing somebody to do whatever they wanted to do, and to simply choose NOT to hinder or stop him, would not, normally, be considered to be "Hate". But, God is NOT "normal", and fallen Mankind is, also, not "normal". Because we are already fallen, God doesn't have to do anything to MAKE us to be sinful or wicked or evil. We already are "fallen" to begin with; so, all God had to do is to sovereignly, passively, "step aside" and allow us to do whatever is in our hearts, and we will, all on our own, manifest Evil in some way.

But for any of us to love God, for any of us to love other saved people, for any of us to love Jesus, and to treasure Him, and to delight ourselves in His Commandments, God has to sovereignly *intervene* in our lives, and He has to *interrupt* our plans, and He must *insert* Himself into our minds and hearts, to powerfully, and forcefully, and graciously open our eyes, and unstopp our ears, and give us a heart to believe, or we would be just as Evil as Esau.

So, in this WAY, "loving Jacob" is God NOT *allowing* Jacob to remain as he is, and "hating Esau" is God merely *stepping aside* and allowing him to do whatever was already in his heart to do. So, God loved Esau. And God *proved* His Love in a thousand different ways.

But God didn't love Esau in the same WAY that He loved Jacob. And so, God passively allowed Esau to remain in his fallen state and to manifest *whatever Esau already had* in his heart to do.

So, even though many people say that they want God to leave them alone, that is truly the most frightening statement anyone can make. What we *should* pray, and what we *should* desire, is that God would *trouble* us greatly, that God would *interrupt* our plans, that God would *insert* Himself into our lives. We should cry out to God that He would *mercifully* and *graciously* and *powerfully* and *sovereignly* take our black hearts, and wash them with red Blood, and make them whiter than snow, so that we, too, may love God, and then love all those whom God has loved.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.