

## Malachi 1:1-5 Sermon

Intro! Bag of milk story; burden; bag of milk hardly does the trick more like a backpack. Not a school backpack, but a camping backpack – sleeping bag across the bottom, bed roll on the top, pots and pans in the middle with clothes and cans of brown beans and a few cans of coke that you want to bring but you'll soon regret.

Hoist 提升 the bag on your back, and you're asked how it feels and you answer "It's okay, I can take it." Slight bite on the one strap into your shoulder. Slight rub of a bar on the small of your back, and its heavy but not too bad so overall you're ready to go.

Get hiking, not a slight bite anymore! Burden. Speaks of it as the word of the LORD. Like this in the prophet, like this *to the people*. The **burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi**.

Jer. 20:9 **I will not make mention of God, nor speak anymore in His name** then suddenly he realized **His word was in my heart like a burning flame shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back and I could not**.

Very significant message – a life changing message, but a challenging message, a painful message to receive – a hard message to bear. A BURDEN 负担 **God reveals the BURDEN of HIS word to HIS people**

### **1. First point of this burden is the proclamation of the love of God!**

Now after all that intro, you'd expect something a lot harder hitting than this, would you not? **The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi...I have loved you, says the LORD.**

I have loved you. The word loved in the Hebrew is in the perfect tense – it means that this love has begun in the past, but that it continues to today. It is a love that is still valid, still functioning, still active. **I have loved you, says the LORD.**

Is this how you think a burden of God's word would begin? Do you think it would ordinarily start with the message, "**God loves you!**" Have you ever had a burden in your heart, from God's word, to proclaim His *love*.

Not His holiness – not yet. Not His majesty – not yet. Not His truth – not yet. But His love!

Incredible start – because what is the overall burden of Malachi? What is the overall thrust of the book? The great theme or story of the prophecy is that God is great and glorious, but that the people are not recognizing it, they are not treating Him like He is great and glorious, and so God will have to bring a day, a great day, that will destroy the wicked, and save the humble, and He will do this through His Son. That is the predominant message 占了主导信息 of the book.

But to get to the message of Christ, first Malachi will have to expose 揭露 the problem of sin. He will have to peel back the self-righteousness of the children of Israel at that time and show them just how much they have insulted God.

Confession – how do we know our sin and misery – out of the law of God. Accurate – Malachi will take them there!

But first, first God would have His people know His love.

Why so essential? The sin of God's people is not just against a holy God; it is not just against a pure God; it is against a God who *loves* us, and a God who loves us with an overwhelming 势不可挡 love; a God who has given us His Son that we might be redeemed.

And we know, in our daily living, that the more someone cares for us the more careful we have to be with their feelings, do we not? If someone invites us to a party, but they only do it because we're in a group of other people, and they've invited everyone else and while we're feeling kind of foolish that we haven't been invited they notice and extend an invitation to us – oh and Greg, I guess you could come too, if you wanted.

Well then we know it won't offend them much if we didn't come.

But if the invitation was given at great cost – out of great love – if it was hand delivered, and they personally spoke to us, or if it was a special celebration for the birthday or anniversary of a loved one and then we didn't come, and we didn't give advance warning – then the offense caused would be far greater.

Why? Because we have shown disregard for someone when they have shown us *great* regard. Or we have loved them *little*, when they have loved us *much*.

And this is a key point of the Gospel story in revealing to us the greatness of our sin. This is where Malachi begins – this is where God begins – when He wishes to confront the people of Israel with their transgression. **I have loved you.**

The message is a thousand times stronger for us today. For though God's love isn't any greater for His people now than it was before, we see it in far more brilliant expression, because God has given us His Son.

One of the neat expressions to focus on in Scripture comes in John 11 when Jesus stands at the tomb of Lazarus. And in John 11:35 we have those famous words, **Jesus wept**. He is at the tomb of Lazarus and Jesus weeps.

The very next verse records this, **then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"**

Beautiful to ponder 思考! The Jews see Jesus weeping outside the tomb and they say **See how He loved him!** Wow! What love did this famous individual have for Lazarus – the death of this friend has moved Him to tears.

But if only they had understood they would have saved their words, and they would have held their tongues; they would put their hands over their mouths. For in just over a weeks time that same Saviour would hang upon the tree, rejected by men and rejected by God. And then, then it would have been a far more fitting time for them to say **See how He loves us!**

All sin is committed against the most High God, it is true. But the greatest atrocity 暴行 is not simply that we have sinned against His majesty, but that we have sinned against His love.

### **2. The response of man / the unbelief of the people**

Now such a message is very difficult to take. We don't want to hear this – in all reality it cuts too deep, it can come too close, it can humble us, if truly understood, if truly realized and not just 'waited through' as a point on a sermon – if it is truly grasped that our sin is against the God who loves – then the natural response of the human heart will be to throw up the walls – to make our defence.

Does He *really* love? Is it *really* true? You tell me I have sinned against His love – how has He loved me?? I was not given a bed of roses for life! I was given no easy path to walk. I've fought for every step I've taken, I've laboured for every dollar I've got, and I've fought through every hardship – **how has God loved me?**

Beloved in the Lord we respond that way. We speak to God that way. We want to excuse our sin, we want to excuse our lifestyle, or our bad habits, or our anger or our bitterness or whatever it is that we keep holding on to. And so we hear that God loves us, and our ears close off to the message. We don't want to hear that – because if we hear that we will have to be confronted 面对 with the magnitude of our sin, and we don't want to be confronted.

Is that not how this works? Is that not one of the tools in our box that we use to avoid the power of the claims of Jesus Christ in our lives?

And they are exercised all the more regularly in times of difficulty. Israel had come back from the exile *excited* about the prospect of

rebuilding the city of Jerusalem and the temple of the Lord. This was going to be *great!* But it wasn't so easy! The life of following God was tough. They had enemies mocking them, plaguing 困扰 them, and even using political means and connections to stop them from working. They found out that living for God was hard. He called for purity, and they couldn't marry any of the good looking men or women who happened to live in the area because they were supposed to be set apart for God. And He wanted the best of their flocks, and the best of their time and their service. It was *hard* work.

So they wandered into sin, and so when Malachi comes saying **thus says the LORD – I have loved you** the people respond **In what way have You loved us?** How have you *shown it?* How have you demonstrated it?

Natural tendency – but God wins out.

### **3. The proof of God's love**

And the LORD says **was not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet Jacob I have loved, and Esau I have hated.**

Come to these words and we are stared straight in the face by one of the hardest teachings of Scripture – a teaching that even mature and seasoned believers can wrestle with, and turn over, and sometimes, when questioned, say, “that's one I simply don't fully understand.”

And there are things like that in Scripture! Peter writes in 2 Peter 3 that Paul has some things in his writings that are **hard to understand!** He's speaking about the Bible! What a blessing! It isn't just me!

What then is God saying here? Perhaps we won't grasp it in full, but what can we learn from this and come away with from this here this morning.

First of all, the proof of God's love for Israel is seen in His **choice** or His **election** 拣选 of Jacob, their father.

How have you loved us? Jacob I have loved.

And there are different ways to speak of God's love shown to us in the Bible. There is God's general love for all mankind that allows us to say to anyone we meet on the street, “God loves you,” and to know it is true. This is the love by which God sincerely and urgently calls for the church to preach the Gospel to **all the nations**; it is the love that makes Him say in Ezekiel 18:32 **I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies...therefore turn and live!** And it is the love which led Jesus to weep over the city of Jerusalem because, for all their privileges, they **did not know the day of their visitation.**

Now that particular way of speaking of God's love is a wonderful way of speaking of God's love. It is sincere, and it is true, and it applies to the entire human race, each and every person who will ever walk upon the face of the earth – even to Judas Iscariot. It is God's great love for all mankind, whom He has made in His image.

But there is another way to speak of God's love in the Bible and that is the focus of this passage – it is God's *particular* love 独特的爱... His *saving* love.

The idea of that kind of a *particular* love is something we are familiar with. I could say that I love you all, that we're like a family. Yet if you all came to my house tonight with sleeping bags and pillows and said, “Great pastor, where do we sleep!” I would have to quickly clarify that you misunderstood my meaning – that I have a particular love for my own family – for my own wife – and therefore want to protect her sanity and mine!

Of this vast human race that God has loved, and He has a general love for each and every one, of this vast human race that God loves He has a *particular* love for His people. A heightened love – a special love- a saving love. And that love is demonstrated and seen and evidenced in the fact that He has **chosen** His people.

There are several things in the idea of this *choosing* of Israel that show just how great God's love is.

If you have your Bibles open please turn with me to Romans 9. We've been there recently so let me quiz you as we turn there – what is Romans 9 about? What is its key teaching? **Election.** If you want to learn about election you can go to Romans 9 or Ephesians 1 – there are many other chapters but those two are pretty key and fulsome.

Romans 9:10-13

Very key passage. What is so significant about it? Idea that God did not choose Jacob because of anything he had done!

Tendency to think of God's love like human love. A young man (but not too young) sees a young woman (who isn't too young!), and he thinks she's beautiful, and he's convinced she's kind, and he loves the way she speaks and he's astounded by her heart and he after getting to know her and building a relationship he says, “I love you!” And the parents say, “Ah...our young man has *fallen in love.*”

That's not how it works with God. The Bible never speaks of God *falling* in love. It speaks of God **setting His love** upon His people. And that is what is expressed in Romans 9. It wasn't that Jacob was so cute in the womb, but Esau was red and hairy already then. It wasn't that Jacob had cute dimples but Esau had an ugly face, and it certainly wasn't because Jacob had a beautiful, selfless heart, while Esau was a selfish, conceited brute.

It was just that God *loved* Jacob. He loved him unreservedly 毫无保留地, and He loved him undeservedly. God loved him in spite of Jacob's selfish heart, and God set His love upon him in *spite* of Jacob's self-assured 过度自信 manner. God set His love upon Jacob simply because God **chose** to love him, and having set His love upon Jacob, He *never, never would take it away.*

And if we were to turn to Ephesians 1 we'd learn something even more – that God could do this, God could set His love upon Jacob, because He chose Jacob not in himself and not by himself, but in and through Jesus Christ. That's the idea of election, and that is the key of election.

So Israel says **In what way have you loved us?** Love – past tense with continuing effect – and God responds **Jacob I have loved but Esau I have hated.** How have I loved you? Unconditionally. Not because of anything in you or in your forefathers, but also unfaithfully, with a love that would span generations and years, and cover sin and cover transgression, because I have loved you in **Christ.**

That is also how God loves His people today. Do you want the proof of God's love? You can't try to find it by looking at how much money is in your bank account, and you can't try to find it by seeing if all you're earthly hopes and dreams are being fulfilled. But you can find it by looking to His love for you in Christ – **unconditional** 所谓无条件的, **never ending, secure because He did not spare His only Son but gave Him up to make a wretch** 可怜虫 **His treasure.**

You see the message is a thousand times stronger for us today. For though God's love isn't any greater for His people now than it was before, we see it in far more brilliant expression, because God has given us His Son.

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Beautiful to ponder! The Jews see Jesus weeping outside the tomb and they say **See how He loved him!** Wow! What love did this famous individual have for Lazarus – the death of this friend has moved Him to tears.

But if only they had understood they would have saved their words, and they would have held their tongues; they would put their hands over their mouths. For in just over a weeks time that same Saviour would hang upon the tree, rejected by men and rejected by God. And then, then it would have been a far more fitting time for them to say **See how He loves us!**

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Another side – **but Esau I have hated.**

That's all we have time for this week! ☺ I am sorely tempted!

What is the key? God's love is seen most truly, and most majestically, against the backdrop of His *wrath* 忿怒

Movement in the church to minimize the righteousness and holiness of God. Movement in the church, but shouldn't say *of* the church. It is an influence from the world – sinful influence. But they want to speak of God's love and His mercy and His forgiveness, but they never want to mention His wrath.

This is not the way of God! Do you want to know, He asks Israel, how I have loved you? Then look – **Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.**

What has that resulted in? Devastation 毁灭 and destruction. Wickedness which doesn't get remedied 补救 Israel too was destroyed. Israel too was run out as a nation! But Israel found grace in the eyes of the Lord! God went after her. (**Hosea?**) He sought her until He found.

But what of Esau? And what of Edom, who were the children of Esau – the nation that came from him. By and large (not understood head for head) – by and large they have rebelled against God and never been turned back to Him. God had punished them for their sin, even as He punished Israel, but there was no change. They became known as a **wicked nation**. The nation against whom **God's wrath burns forever**.

Now for Israel, at this time, that was all God gave. You want to know how I have showed you My love? Then look at what it means to be under My wrath – that is not Your lot.

But to us He shows far more.

John 11:36 **See how He loved him!**

Does it mean that God actually *hates* the wicked? Answer is yes and no. The Bible teaches us that God hates the wicked. It isn't Malachi alone! 14 times in the first 50 Psalms this is mentioned.

We have a slogan in the church – and its an excellent slogan, “Hate the sin, love the sinner.” Very good slogan, we are called to love and do good even to those who hate us and spitefully use us. And in that sense God loves the sinner as well. He still gives them good gifts. He grieves 懊悔 their hardness of heart. He does not delight in their destruction but yearns for them to turn and live.

And yet when there is no repentance, we stand under the righteous wrath and indignation 愤慨 of God. And that doesn't just fall on our sin, it falls on us as those who commit that sin. Psalm 5:5 “God **hates all workers of iniquity**” or Ps. 11:5 **The wicked and the one who works violence His soul hates.**

Strong language, but He's not a weak God. The Bible says that even believers, before converted, whether we remember such a time or not, were **children of wrath just as the others.**

Salvation isn't a game, and its not just a ‘touching’ or ‘fulfilling’ option that you can opt for in life. It is the only way to escape the godly and righteous anger of a holy and just God. And if you stand outside of Christ you stand under the wrath of this holy God.

How has God loved us? Do you remember what kind of God this is? Do you remember how He repays sin? Do you remember how He treats those who rebel against Him? **But He has loved you!**

And here is **burden** of Malachi! God has **loved you**, and into the face of this God you have rebelled. And before the face of *this* God you have chosen the trifling fancies.

There is the call for repentance and there is the call that brings conviction of soul – a call that comes out of the love of God and drives us to recognize how great is His mercy and how much we need of it. \*\*\*\*\*

**and** it is not, what we might call, a natural quality in God. It isn't inherent to His being to hate. But it is inherent in His being to love, and it is inherent to His being to be holy, and therefore when there are some who fight against when there *will be* no repentance

First take the no. General love. Love which extends the Gospel to all. Love which brings the rain. Love which extends from the Creator to the creature. BUT – not a love that saves. They share no part in that saving love that God is a holy God.

What do we understand of the Lord's *hate*? Does God hate? Old saying, “Hate the sin, love the sinner.” Is that God's saying? Does it apply to everyone, in God's eyes?

In some sense we've already dealt with part of this question and the answer is yes. Yes, God loves all, *in some sense*.

But at the same time, the Bible speaks of God's *hatred* against the wicked. In the first 50 Psalms alone, we read of God's hatred and wrath against not just sin, but the sinner, whether the wicked or the liar or the covetous – we read of God's hatred and wrath upon the *individual* 14 times in the first 50 Psalms. Like Psalm 5:5 “God **hates all workers of iniquity**” or Ps. 11:5 **The wicked and the one who works violence His soul hates.**

This idea of the hatred of God is an outflow 延伸 of the fact that He is holy.

When we think of God's love for His people, sometimes we ask, “How could a holy God love a sinner like us?” (Or one who is sinful, like us) and the answer is, “Because of Jesus.” Through the work of Jesus. Because what happens is that through the work of Jesus everyone who comes to Christ is made holy, they are made pure and clean, they are made new.

But what happens for those who are not under the blood of Jesus? God can still love them with a general love; He can grieve their hardness of heart and He can bless them with temporal blessings in this world – a home, or food, or rain and sunshine – whatever those blessings might be.

But if they are not under the saving blood of Jesus Christ then they remain **objects of wrath**. And that is exactly how this passage defines God's hatred for Esau. God's hatred is not vindictive 报复性的 It is not mere hatred for hatred's sake. Certainly it is not a grudge or anything of that kind. It is the expression of a holy God against a man or a woman who has rejected God to hold on to sin. And that expression is an expression of wrath. In this text that wrath is seen in physical terms. **God has laid waste Esau's mountains and heritage. Edom (the children of Esau) have planned to build the desolate 荒凉 places, but God will throw them down.** Why? Why is this the case? **They shall be called the territory of wickedness** – that is what characterizes them – wickedness. **And they shall be called the people against whom the LORD will have indignation forever.**

This doesn't mean that an Edomite can never be saved – they most certainly can! Anyone, in Christ, is saved from the curse of God which our sins have brought upon us. But this is what God means when He says **Esau I have hated** He has chosen to pour out His wrath upon Esau.

All of us have this apart from Christ, and it is only in understanding this that we come to truly understand the significance of the cross. For there Jesus suffered under the curse of Edom. There Jesus suffered under the curse of the wrathful. That is love. Result – God's people see His power and glory beyond the walls of the church!