

**Series:** Malachi: Rediscovering God's Unchanging Love

**Sermon:** A Love You Have Forgotten

**Passage:** Malachi 1:1-5



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## Study Resources:

	<b>Bible Project Overview Video</b>		<b>Free commentary with notes on the background, context, etc.</b>
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**Big Idea:** God's love doesn't change, even though our circumstances around us change.

- 1<sup>st</sup> takeaway: God's covenant love is irrevocable love.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> takeaway: God's covenant love is an electing love.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> takeaway: God's covenant love is a far-reaching love.

## Read

Read the text out loud. Malachi was meant to be read aloud in front of a group of people. By reading it aloud, we can hear the rhythm and flow of the prophecy.

## Head

1. Context matters when we study any book. Recall the post-exilic life of Malachi's day. If you are familiar with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, recall their work and ministry. In what specific ways was life post-exile disappointing for the Jews in Malachi's day (e.g., poverty, small population, subservience to Persia)? Why was this feeling of disillusionment such a dangerous spiritual state for them?
2. Read about the essence of God's covenant relationship in Deut. 7:7-10. Malachi begins his prophecy by recalling not what they have done, but first what God has done for his people. Why does it matter to remember God's divine initiative and that he first moved toward us through establishing a covenant? (Rom. 5:8; Luke 22:20).
3. God's logic to counter the people's cynicism was to prove His love. He points to the contrast **between Jacob and Esau** (Gen. 25:23–26). God changed Jacob's name to Israel—consequently the Israelites considered themselves sons and daughters of Jacob. Esau symbolizes the Edomites, who descended from Jacob's evil, vengeful brother. The Edomites lived in the hills that shared a border with Judah (the southern nation of God's people) and were only a few dozen miles from Judah's capital, Jerusalem. Like Esau, the Edomites were

bad neighbors. Several times, Edom ransacked the kingdom of Judah in the south and Israel in the north. But that's not the worst part. Edom would wait to do their pillaging until another foreign nation invaded; hence God's strong feelings against the Edomites. So why is God's selection of Jacob (despite his flaws) and rejection of Esau the ultimate "proof" of God's electing love in this context, rather than pointing to their current blessings? What does the destruction of Edom (vv. 3-4) demonstrate about the difference between a people chosen by God's covenant love and a people left to their own rebellious pride?

## **Heart**

4. When our circumstances change, it's so easy to begin to go down a path of doubting God and his love for us. Can you relate to ever becoming cynical, doubtful, or disillusioned in your spiritual walk, and becoming a "quiet quitter?" In other words, you just went through the religious motions but lacked passion and genuine engagement. Briefly share. What did it feel and look like? Additionally, what can we do in these times to move away from "quiet quitting" and become more engaged disciples?
5. When the Malachi people witnessed God's sovereign power over Edom, they were meant to change their declaration and reject cynicism. For us, we can read about God's electing love in Christ Jesus from Ephesians 1:1-14. How does this make you feel? What if you mediated more on these truths each week? How do you think this would positively impact your mind and heart?

## **HANDS**

6. Malachi 1:15 highlights God's far-reaching covenant love. The goal was for Israel to declare God's greatness "beyond their borders." This extends the original blessing God gave to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 through the people in Malachi's day and extends into the church age (Read how Paul picks this up in Galatians 3:8)

But let's face it, when we don't feel God's love, or his blessing, or favor, it can surely be hard to tell others about it! If you struggle to embrace God's love, what's one way you can embrace it more in your daily rhythms?

Or how can the security of God's unchanging, far-reaching love empower you to be a more courageous witness of Christ to those "beyond your borders" (neighbors, coworkers, social spheres)? What is one simple, but concrete step you will take in the next seven days to live this out?