

A Love That Won't Let You Go - Malachi 1:2-5

Introduction: Last Sunday night we began a study of the last book of the Old Testament – the book of Malachi. Though it is a new study, tonight's message ties in very well with our previous study as we examined the sermons in song, because the title of tonight's message is very close to a beloved hymn – “O Love That Will not Let Me Go” by George Matheson.

When George Matheson was 19, he was engaged and studying for the ministry, but somehow, he lost his eyesight, and as a result, his fiancée broke their engagement, and said to him, *“I cannot see my way clear to go through life bound by the chains of marriage to a blind man.”* Well, Matheson never married, but in 1882, at the age of 40, when one of his sisters got married, it brought back memories of his heartbreak. From the depths of despair he penned the words of the great hymn:

“O Love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe, That in thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.”

In the opening verses of Malachi, we are reminded that God loves us with a love that will never let us go. There is no greater thought than that God loves us with an abiding love.

It was a realization of God's great love that changed the heart and ministry of D.L. Moody. While in England in 1867, D.L. Moody met Harry Moorhouse. Moody said to Moorhouse, *“If you ever come to Chicago, I want you to preach for me.”* One day Moody received a telegram from Moorhouse that he was going to be in Chicago. Moody scheduled him to preach a week for him while he was away in a meeting. When he returned in the middle of the week, he asked his wife, *“What did Moorhouse preach on Sunday night?”* She answered, *“Sunday night he took John 3:16 and preached on God's love.”* He asked, *“What about Monday night?”* *“It was the same text but a different sermon”* she said. Moody asked about Tuesday and Wednesday night. His wife said, *“It was the same text but a different sermon.”* Moody said, *“That's taking one attribute of God and emphasizing it out of proportion.”* His wife did not argue with him but told him to go and hear him for your self. Moody went to the services that night and when Moorhouse got up to preach, he said, *“I have been looking through all 66 books of the Bible, but if you'll forgive me, it will be the Gospel according to John. I've looked at the 21 chapters, and I could preach on any one of them, but it will be the third chapter. I've studied the 36 verses, and I could comment on any one of them, but if you don't mind, it will be the 16th verse.”* Moody just about had a heart attack. He was so irritated. But he said as the service went on, the love of God melted his heart. His life was changed. He said *“I took the word love, and I do not know how many weeks I spent in*

studying it. I had been feeding on the love of God so long that. . . I got full of God's love. It ran out my fingers. You take up the subject of love in the Bible and you will get so full of it that all you have to do is open your lips and a flow of God's love will flow forth." The love of God ought to be overflowing out of the heart of every believer.

Now let's look at the subject of God's love in the opening verses of Malachi. First, we see:

1. A Declaration of God's Love

God says, *"I have loved you."* Charles and Mary Lamb were brother and sister. Both were English writers. At times Mary suffered bouts of temporary insanity. In 1796, while Charles and Mary were still living at home, in a moment of insanity, Mary picked up a kitchen knife and stabbed their mother to death. The court understood Mary's mental problems and put her in the custody of Charles, and she lived with him most of the time until he died in 1834.

Dr. George W. Truett, the former pastor of Dallas First Baptist Church many years ago, writing about Charles Lamb's love for his sister Mary said, *"I think there is nothing in history more touching than the behavior of Charles Lamb, the brilliant British essayist and critic, who devoted his best hours to his sister, Mary, who had recurring spells of insanity. He was to be seen many times in the morning, ere the sun came up, traversing the lanes of England, talking with Mary, telling her about the singing birds, and the smiling flowers, seeking to keep back that encroaching wave of insanity as it persisted in coming again and again."* Dr. Truett used one word to describe Charles love and devotion to Mary. It was the word *"Glorious!"*
(thelivingwordtbc.com/malachi2.htm)

That's a wonderful way to describe God's love to man - glorious! What a glorious truth it is! How glorious is it?

A. It's an Affirmation of God's Personal Love. In vs. 2, God is affirming His love to His people. We should have learned this when we learned: *Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so."*

There are some things in this world that are hard for me to believe: That a Mother would not love her child, or that a child would not love their parent, or that a spouse would not love their mate, but it happens regularly. But one thing will never happen: God will never stop loving His children.

God affirms His love for us when He says it in His Word. God affirmed in what He did for us on the Cross. God affirmed His love for us when He saved us. God affirms His love for us in His daily presence, help, and kindness. When He gives us another day, another breath, another morsel of food to eat or water to drink. He's

reminding us and affirming to us, *"I have loved you."*

B. It's an Assurance of His Perpetual Love. The statement, *"I have loved you"* is in the perfect tense. That means that God had loved them in the past and He loves them in the present. God's love is an undeniable love, and an unending love. It is a *"love that will not let me go."*

The last stanza of the song *"The Love of God."* was found written on a cell wall in a prison by a prisoner. *"Could we with ink the ocean fill, And were the skies of parchment made, Were every stalk on earth a quill, And every man a scribe by trade. To write the love of God above, Would drain the ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky. O love of God, How rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It shall forevermore endure, The saints and angels song."*

There has never been a time when God has not loved us. God has always loved us. There may be a time when others will stop loving us, but God will never stop loving us. God will love us no matter what we've done.

R.L. Moyer once wrote: *"You may go back beyond the time when a wave beat upon the beach, or a star shone in the sky, or the leaf of a tree fluttered in the breeze, and when you get back as far as the mind can reach, you will be no nearer the beginning of God's love for you than you are now. If you project your mind into the future to the time when the mountains have molded down into dust, or beyond the time when the sun has grown cold, and the stars are old, and the leaves of the judgment book unfold, you will be no nearer to the end of God's love than you are now."* (firstbaptistcarterville.org/sermons/01_03_99.htm)

2. A Deliberation of God's Love

God declared His love and the people debated His love. The people respond to God's statement, *"I have loved you"* by saying, *"Really? How have you loved us?"*

We might say, *"How could anyone doubt that God loves them?"* But how many times have you heard someone say, *"If God really loved me, He wouldn't have let this happen?"* What does this deliberation of God's love reveal about this people?

A. They Were Indifferent. It revealed the coldness and indifference of their hearts. God had loved them but they were totally indifferent to that love.

We receive His love day by day, but sometimes that love has little meaning and little affect on our life. Love acknowledged leads to a life affected. A husband can say he loves his wife, but that love will be more than what one says with their lips. It will be shown in their life.

When one will not be faithful in our church attendance it reveals we have not been affected by God's love.

When we will not regularly read the Word of God it reveals we have not been affected by God's love. When one will not be a regular tither to the Church of God it reveals we have not been affected by God's love. When we will not be concerned with the will of God for our lives it reveals we have not been affected by God's love. When we will not be a regular server in the Work of God it reveals we have not been affected by God's love. When we will not regularly obey the Commands of God it reveals we have not been affected by God's love. Only a cold, indifferent, and unaffected heart would question the love of God.

B. They Were Unappreciative. An ungrateful heart is often blind to the blessings God bestows upon them. God had loved them, but they were unappreciative of that love. Often in life, we that are the daily recipients of God's love are not only unaffected by His love, but also unappreciative of that love.

3. A Demonstration of God's Love

God refuted their charge by giving them 2 examples of His love for them.

A. He Chooses Us. We see in verses 2-3 God's love demonstrated. The first demonstration of God's love involved Jacob and Esau. By them God was reminding Israel of how He had shown a special love toward them. Concerning Jacob, God says, *"I have loved Jacob."* Concerning Esau, God says, *"I hated Esau."*

This doesn't indicate a denial of love for Esau, but a demonstration of love for Jacob. The statement that God hated Esau is used to contrast the great love God had for Israel.

In Luke 14:26 God says that a disciple must *"hate"* his family and himself, or he could not be a disciple. This truth is clarified in **Matthew 10:37 (NIV)** *"Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me;"*

God was saying to Israel, *"You debate My love for you. You doubt My love for you. Yet I have loved you with a special love. I have loved you more than anyone else."*

That special love is seen in the fact, that Esau was the firstborn and the natural heir to the birthright and blessing. But God had chosen Jacob as the one who would receive that birthright and blessing.

Now, the truth is, if we had been making the choice, we would have chosen Esau, the natural heir. Not only because he was the firstborn, but seemed the better candidate for the blessing. Jacob was a crook, a cheat, and con artist. Someone has said, *"The difficult question is not why God said He hated Esau, but how could He love Jacob?"*

God was saying, *"I have loved you love. I have made you My people. I have chosen you to reveal myself, to give My word and My Son through, a people through which to carry out My spiritual purposes."* God reminds

them that His is a love that is undeserved. They did not earn His love. He chose to love them.

The truth is, God's love is undeserved in all our lives. It is a story of grace. The amazing truth of it all is that he loves us. But why does He love us? In the words of Isaac Watts: *Amazing pity, grace unknown, And love beyond degree.*

B. He Protects Us. (3b-5). "Mountains" refers to the land of the Edomites, who were Esau's descendants. The Edomites were a godless and immoral people who continually oppressed Israel, and still do to this day. God describes how He destroyed them because of their sinfulness and hatefulness of Israel.

God says, *"You doubt My love. Look at how I have cared for you, protected you, destroyed your enemies."* God's Word not only demonstrates His love for us, but also His works demonstrate His love for us. God was saying to them and to us as well, *"There is no reason at all why you should doubt My love for you."*

There was once a wife who was living on a starvation diet of affection. Her husband never gave her any signs of love, and her need to be appreciated went unfulfilled. At her wit's end, she blurted out, *"Why don't you ever tell me that you love me?"* The man stoically responded, *"When we were married I told you that I loved you, and if I ever change my mind I will let you know."*

Well, God's love is not without signs of affection every day of our lives. His love is a love that won't ever let us go.