

MALACHI: CALL TO OVERCOME SPIRITUAL APATHY

I: Recalling God's Love For His Calloused People

(Malachi 1:1-5)

I. Introduction

- A. About 100 years after the Hebrew exiles returned from Babylon and rebuilt Jerusalem and the temple, their "initial enthusiasm had worn off," with life and worship being mere routines. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, "Introduction to the Book of Malachi: The Times," p. 1325)
- B. God raised up Malachi to call the people to repentance from their spiritual apathy, and Malachi 1:1-5 began that call with God's reminder of His special calling and treatment of His people. We view it for our insight:

II. Recalling God's Love For His Calloused People, Malachi 1:1-5.

- A. Malachi began his prophetic message with a *massa*, a "burden" or "oracle" that in prophetic books "introduces messages of a threatening nature 27 times" as it does here, Malachi 1:1a; Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1575.
- B. This "burden" comprised "the word of the Lord to Israel," a statement "which recalls God's association with the covenant He made with Israel at Sinai" and thus "concerns problems in the covenant relationship between God and Israel," Malachi 1:1b; *Ibid.*
- C. The Lord stated that He loved Israel, and the spiritually apathetic, calloused generation that Malachi addressed would ask how God loved them, that they were not sensing any special evidence of His love, Malachi 1:2a.
- D. God responded that He had loved Israel as evidenced in two major ways, Malachi 1:2b-5:
 - 1. First, God had loved Israel as seen in His choice of her over Edom to be His covenant people, v. 2b-3a:
 - a. Though Esau had been Isaac's eldest and his favored son (cf. Genesis 25:19-28), before the twins Esau and Jacob had been born, God had chosen Jacob over Esau for a covenant relationship (Romans 9:10-13).
 - b. God's claim that He had loved Jacob but "hated" Esau indicated God's selection of Jacob and his seed but His rejection of Esau to a "chosen position," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, fn. to Malachi 1:2-3.
 - 2. Second, God had loved Israel as seen in His restoration of Israel in contrast to Edom's extinction, v. 3b-5:
 - a. Though both Israel and Edom had suffered God's punishment for sin by being invaded by Babylon in the sixth century (Jeremiah 27:2-8), God had "repeatedly promised to restore Israel (because of His covenant promises, Deut. 4:29-31; 30:1-10), but He had condemned Edom to come to complete destruction, never to be restored (Jer. 49:7-22; Ezek. 35)," *Ibid.*, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1576. God's reason for Edom's condemnation was Edom's great hatred and mistreatment of His people Israel, cf. Obadiah 10-14.
 - b. God had thus turned Edom's mountains into a wasteland where only desert jackals would have that land to pass on to their "descendants," Malachi 1:3b *ESV, NIV; Ibid.*
 - c. Even Edom's "greatest efforts to rebuild its ruins would be frustrated by the Lord Almighty," Malachi 1:4a; *Ibid.* "In the fifth century, the Nabateans, an Arabian tribe, occupied Edom (located south and east of Judea) and forced the Edomites westward into a desert area later known as Idumea. In the fourth century, the Nabateans took over Idumea as well," *Ibid.*
 - d. Edom would be called "the wicked country" in contrast to Israel's "Holy Land" of divine blessing, for the Edomites would be known as the people with whom the Lord was angry forever, Malachi 1:4b.
 - e. In seeing God's sovereign dealings to keep pursuing Edom so as to make it a perpetual ruin as a nation and people, Israel's people would eventually understand the depth of God's commitment to her and of His sovereignty over the whole earth as they claimed, "Great is the Lord – even beyond the borders of Israel!" (Malachi 1:5; *Ibid.*)

Lesson: *In beginning to address His spiritually complacent people of Israel, God reminded them of His gracious selection of their believing forefather Jacob over his older, unbelieving brother Esau, and that for a covenant relation that would provide Israel with a rebound from the Babylonian invasion where Esau's descendants as the Edomites would only face perpetual destruction from the Lord for their hatred of Israel.*

Application: *(1) May we counter spiritual complacency in our lives by recalling the great grace of God that was involved in saving us through faith. (2) May we also counter spiritual complacency by recalling the eternal punishment on all who reject Christ as Savior as reason always to be grateful to God for our salvation. (3) May we counter spiritual complacency by noting the great discipline that we have seen God level on other believers who have continued to live in sin, that we depart from complacency and live in reverent accountability to God! (4) If we are spiritually complacent, may we confess it as sin and obey the Lord.*