

Malachi's Unloved God

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The Jews were back in their homeland after the Babylonian captivity. The temple had been rebuilt. Now, no doubt, many of them had been working with Nehemiah on rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Sacrifices were being offered in the rebuilt temple. The ceremonies and rituals of the law of Moses were being outwardly followed. If you asked the people how they were doing in their relationship with God, they would say, "Fine." "Everything is great!" "We are doing what God wants." But God didn't see it that way. God felt like He could just drop completely out of sight and Israel wouldn't even miss Him." And that must be hard for God since He loved them so.

Imagine an insensitive wife who is oblivious to the frustration and unhappiness of her husband. The wife thinks all is well but the husband would have a different answer. Well, God is that husband in the book of Malachi. All was not well. He loved the people but they didn't love Him back.

Listen to the discourse, "I have loved you," says the Lord. But you say, "How have you loved us?" (Mal. 1:2.) How tragic! How sad! They were focused on their problems of rebuilding the wall. They had not seen any of God's promises of a glorious future for the rebuilt temple come to pass. So, they hear God say He loved them and their answer was, "yawn." Oh, they kept up with the sacrifices and offerings. But because they didn't love God back, they felt ok offering blind and lame sacrifices. God was weary of such but they were surprised at His reaction. They gave but not as the law prescribed. God was robbed but they didn't see it that way. Their moral compass was not pointing toward God but to their own desires yet they couldn't see that nor understand why God would complain. All of this and more can all be traced back to their failure to love God and recognize His love.

In Revelation 2:1-7, we read how the church at Ephesus had left their first love. Sure, they could recognize false teaching and false teachers. Sure, they had works, doing the things Christians do in service and worship to God. Yes, they were patient and bore up under trials of various sorts. They were active, patient, and standing for the truth. But love was gone. It was no longer a motive for what they did. And Jesus told them to repent. They are a perfect example of the people Malachi is addressing.

Israel was a people familiar with the things of God. Because of the covenant God made with them, they were born into a relationship with God. From birth, their whole lives were centered on religion. And they could act this way?! And what of Christians today, who have been so for any length of time. We hear "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16) and we nod, "That's nice" (yawn)! We shrug our shoulders and go on. Lives are crowded with business. Problems and trials abound on every hand. We've heard the message of God's love preached over and over to the point it doesn't touch the heart any more. We hear God say "I have loved you and proved it by the cross" but our hearts no longer are touched by the gospel. Thus, our service becomes useless, empty, and vain. We can sing all we want, observe Lord's supper after Lord's supper, feed every poor person on earth, and know the answer to every theological question, but if there is no love, God is cheated of our hearts and this wearies Him. How heart-breaking it must be for God to have expressed His love for His people only to have them shrug their shoulders and go on. Are we guilty of making God grow weary?