

BEING ASSURED OF GOD'S LOVE
MALACHI 1:1-5

Introduction

Has there ever been a time (or times) in your life that caused you to **doubt the love of God for you?** I'm talking about the kind of times we go through that **we wonder where God is as we're going through some deep trial** or maybe **we question why God didn't intervene in some situation or trial.**

It usually happens when we get focused on the **circumstances** or **happenings in our life that catch us off guard!**

It might be the **severe illness, injury** and/or maybe even **death** of a loved one.

It might be the onset of a **debilitating sickness or injury** that keeps us from enjoying the vibrant, productive life we once knew.

It might be **being deeply hurt** by someone you love or loved.

It might be being **abused or abandoned** by a spouse or some other loved one.

It might be something else that I didn't mention, but **whatever it is flashed in your mind while I have been talking.** (*You know...*)

It can also happen **when God doesn't meet our expectations of how we think He ought to be! We all have expectations and ideas about God!** Sometimes our expectations of how God should be and what He should do are very different from what we perceive in our life as we are going through difficult times. That's why it is so important for us to draw near to God— So we can form a deep relationship with Him and know Him in a better way!

With today being Valentine's Day, let's focus on His love for us! Because He indeed loves us more than our hearts can fathom sometimes!

Now understand that Satan **wants to get our eyes and our hearts focused on the happenings in our life...the circumstances in our life...he wants us to think that God doesn't really love us and that the proof is in the circumstances and happenings!**

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He wants us to get mad at God over the things that happen to us and/or our loved ones so that we abandon God! We just cast Him off!

But listen, Satan is a dirty, rotten, stinking, liar who is out to deceive us!

Now, in our text this morning, we find the nation of Israel in a familiar place...she is at odds with the LORD her God despite His great love for her! Judah was back in the land of promise after their 70-year captivity in Babylon! Both the city of Jerusalem and the Temple had been rebuilt for almost a century at this point!

But **the lessons from the captivity had been forgotten and the people were losing their enthusiasm for the LORD and His WORSHIP! Apathy and disillusionment** had set in because the prophetic messages surrounding the coming Messiah had yet to be fulfilled!

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Let's fast-forward a minute to today...Here we are waiting on the coming of the LORD for His own! But many have gotten **apathetic and disillusioned** because Jesus hasn't come back yet and with all that is going on in the world right now many think that somehow He is late! And those attitudes have affected a growing number of folks **WORSHIP** of the LORD! **Faithfulness and service to God have slacked to where it is hard to keep ministries alive in the Church because of a lack of workers!**

With all that is happening in our world and especially in our own nation **it is easy to get disillusioned and think somehow that God has forgotten us! But He hasn't! And His chastening proves, that He hasn't!** *Hebrews 12:5-6 – "5 And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: 6 For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."*

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Back to Judah here...They had strayed from the LORD...and many of the sins that brought the downfall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. were back to being practiced again! They had not learned from the LORD's dealing with their forefathers' sins! Their **hypocrisy, neglect of God, and careless living** were having some devastating consequences in the their lives! It always does!

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They were already experiencing the judgment that comes from just sins natural consequences! When we get away from God, some of the worst judgment is the things that come from just sin itself! That was happening already! But other judgment would be coming again as well!

So when the prophet brought them the message of the LORD, the LORD already knew that His people doubted His love!

And listen to me today! It is the same with us! God knows our heart today just as well as He knew the heart of His nation! So here is our focus today:

HOW CAN WE BE ASSURED OF GOD'S LOVE?

I. THE CHALLENGE OF LOVE—IS TO BELIEVE THAT GOD LOVES US! (Vs. 2)

The Truth Of The Matter Is That Sometimes Even The Greatest Of Godly People Can Doubt God's Love! Scriptural Examples:

Abraham: Abram was called out of UR in *Genesis 12:1-8* to go to a land God was going to give to him. He got there, and then a famine came (Vs 10). Instead of seeking the LORD and trusting Him, Abram went down into Egypt to live for a while which led to some trouble for him. **Note: We are not told that Abraham sought the LORD'S face about what to do when the famine came. He just went down to Egypt on his own.**

Moses: Moses was called by God to deliver Israel from bondage in *Exodus 3-4*. After Moses first approach to Pharaoh, the children of Israel's bondage was made more difficult and they began to complain to Moses and Aaron in *Exodus 5:21-23*. Moses didn't understand what was going on and so He complained to God! **But, God's timing was different than Moses timing.**

After God did deliver the children of Israel from Egypt, He placed other challenges that appeared to be inconsistent with what Moses thought God should do.

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(*Exodus 15:22-25; 17:1-7*) But, God had His purposes for allowing the hardships on His people. Their faith was being tested.

Joshua: After campaigning against Jericho and having a great victory there, Israel is then seen running in defeat against little Ai and losing 31 men in the battle. Joshua fell on his face before God wondering what happened! **Well, there was sin in the camp [because of Achan]. God's love had not changed—sin removed His blessings and His love was being expressed by His chastisement.**

Job: The Bible says in *Job 1:1* that Job was *an upright man who feared God and eschewed evil*. By the end of **Chapter 1**, he had lost his 10 children, his servants, and all of his wealth! In **Chapter 2**, he lost his health and his wife turned on him! Then, his 3 friends came to grieve with him and only increased his grief! It appeared that He had been abandoned by God. **Yet, God was fully in control in proving His servant Job! Job didn't understand that until Chapter 40.**

Disciples: In *Mark 6:45*, Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship and go to the other side. He then sent them into a storm. **Jesus came to them and revealed Himself again to His disciples in the storm because vs 52 says that they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened.**

We Doubt: When family problems come, we can doubt.
When financial woes come, we can doubt.
When physical problems plague us, we can doubt.

Sometimes our sin causes the problem to begin with. (*Achan*)
Sometimes we don't seek God's face about the problem. (*Abraham*)
Sometimes we are not willing to submit to God's timing. (*Moses*)

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Sometimes God may be testing our faith in Him. (*Israel*)
Sometimes we may not be able to figure it out! (*Job*)
Sometimes God needs to soften up our hearts because they are hard!
(*Disciples*)

THE CHALLENGE OF LOVE—IS TO BELIEVE GOD LOVES US

II. THE CAUSE OF LOVE—LOVE BEGAN WITH GOD! (*Vs 2a*)
The LORD points out to His people that HE CHOSE to love them!

1 John 4:10—“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

1 John 4:19—“We love him, because he first loved us.”

(e.g. In *Genesis 3*, when Adam and Eve had first sinned...Who went seeking who?)

III. THE CHOICE OF LOVE—GOD LOVES US BECAUSE HE
CHOOSES TO! (*Vs. 2c*)

Ephesians 2:4-6—“4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:”

1 John 3:16—“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

1 John 4:9—“In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.”

John 3:16—“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Romans 5:6-10

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IV. THE CONFIRMATION OF LOVE—GOD'S ABIDING
FAITHFULNESS AND DEFEAT OF OUR ENEMIES! (*Vs 3-4*)
(The enemies of the Believer are: **The World, The Flesh, The Devil!**)
The LORD has overcome each of these and so have we in Him!

A. The Proof Is In What Christ Has Done!

Psalm 107:2—“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;”

Hebrews 4:15—“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”

Hebrews 2:14-15—“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15 And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

B. The Proof Is In What Christ Is Doing!

*Hebrews 13:5-6—“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: **for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.**”*

*1 John 4:4—“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because **greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.**”*

C. The Proof Is In What Christ Will Ultimately Do!

1 Corinthians 15:26—“The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

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V. THE COURTESY OF LOVE—LOVE SHOULD BE RESPONDED TO PROPERLY, IT SHOULD BE RETURNED! Acknowledging God's love for her, Israel should have responded by loving Him back and obeying His commands, but she did not.

God loves perfectly and completely! His love is a love of ACTION not of just FEELINGS!

God is altogether faithful and true to His promises. However, we oftentimes spurn the love of God in many different ways:

- 1) **We reject His love in that we oftentimes are willingly disobedient to Him!**
- 2) **We reject His love in that we give other things the priority that He both wants and deserves!**
- 3) **We reject His love when we just live for ourselves as if He does not exist!**

**God loves us even when we neglect or disobey Him!
However, He loves us too much to leave us in our sinful condition!**

Sometimes, it is difficult to discern what God is doing in our lives and He may appear to be unloving or even missing in action.

Conclusion

Are You Up To The Challenge Of Love?

Can you just believe that God loves you?

Remember, love began with Him!

He loves us because He chooses too!

He will be faithful and true to the end!

Are You Giving Back The Courtesy Of Love?

Are you responding to God's love properly?

You can deny it, doubt it, or spurn it OR you can return it!

Are you returning the love that God has shown toward you?