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Questioning the Love of God

Malachi 1:2-5

In his commentary on Malachi, G. Campbell Morgan made the following observation regarding the people to whom Malachi was written:

They have been most particular and strict in outward observances, but their hearts have been far away from their ceremonials [their religious activities]. They have been boasting themselves in their knowledge of truth, responding to that knowledge mechanically, technically, but their hearts, their lives, their characters, the inwardness of their natures, have been a perpetual contradiction in the eye of

heaven, to the will of God. And when the prophet tells them what God thinks of them, they, with astonishment and impertinence, look into his face and say, 'We don't see this at all!' To translate it into the language of the New Testament- 'having the form of godliness, they deny the power.' (Morgan, 1999, pp. 30-31)

Morgan is right on. The prophecy before us is addressing what we might call, "Mechanistic Christianity" — that is, a Christianity whose adherents do all the right, beneficial, and godly things — like studying the Bible, worshipping in Spirit and truth, the avoidance of sin, cultural engagement, and so much more- and yet do it not out of love for the Lord or the desire to know or enjoy Him, but out of religious duty in the hopes that God might be pleased. It is going-through-the-motions Christianity!

Now when a child of God falls into mechanistic Christianity — as the people of God did in Malachi's day — there are numerous errors which typically arise, the first revolving around the love of God which is our focus! James Montgomery Boice speaking of those who have succumbed to mechanistic Christianity wrote:

That is precisely what thousands of self-righteous churchgoing people do. They do not consider themselves irreligious. On the contrary, they think of themselves as people whom God in the very necessity of the case must approve. But whenever they have a problem in life- if a job falls through, if a romance goes sour, if sickness or death touches someone close to them, or even if they fall sick themselves- they immediately blame God, holding him accountable [*~I thought you loved me?!?*]. (Boice, 2006, p. 576)

Such were the people of Malachi's day and the people of our own day! Yet would you notice, God did NOT reject them or kick them out of His Kingdom. RATHER, in an act of love, He patiently corrected them. He began with the dangers of mechanistic Christianity, questioning the love of God.¹

Malachi 1:2a, "I have loved you," says the Lord...."

This is an enormous statement on the part of God! When we think of God's love, we tend to think of it as a NT teaching. Yet we must see that it permeates the entire Bible such that it can be found on every page of Scripture. Theologically, the Bible defines God's love NOT in terms of an emotion or feeling, BUT that which is seen at the cross of Christ (John 3:16) — which on the part of God the Father was an act of self-giving which resulted in an act of self-sacrifice on behalf of the utterly unworthy. That is biblical love!

Now we could spend weeks discussing God's love — that it is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable² — BUT I'm not sure we would be any different from where we are today on account of our propensity to despise what is familiar! A. W. Tozer wrote:

Whenever you hear God's truth... you will go either in the direction you are moved, or you will just wait. If you wait, you will find that the next time you hear the truth, it will not move you quite as much. The next time, it will move you less- and the time will come when that truth will not move you at all.' (Tozer, 1920)

I think this is where many of us are when it comes to God's love! It most certainly is where God's people were in Malachi's day and it reflects our struggle to accept that God loves us.

Our Struggle to Accept that God Loves Us, Malachi 1:2b.

Malachi 1:2b, "I have loved you,' says the Lord. But you say³, 'How hast Thou loved us?'..."

If we could go back in time and ask any of the Israelites living in Palestine in Malachi's day, I dare say most if not every Jew could articulate that

1. They were the chosen people of God,
2. That God had loved them with an everlasting love, and
3. That love resulted in the glorious events of the Exodus which was celebrated yearly as a nation and daily in the temple sacrifices!

Yet, the difficulties of life in Palestine at this time amongst God's people argued for a different conclusion! With Job we must recognize that our tendency is to judge God by His providences- that is, by the relative ease or difficulty of our lives. Accordingly, when we encounter a difficult path that stretches for any length of time, we began to question the love of God! That was God's people at this time. Recall that God's people had been back in the Promised Land now for almost 100 years. The temple had been rebuilt and the city walls erected. And yet through all of this time, the path was long and the road incredibly rough. Their Gentile neighbors hated them — which is no big deal except that these heathen peoples had power and strength to make good on any threat. As such good people at times were abused, mistreated, and even murdered by them! So much for the loving protection of God!

Then there was the struggle just to make a living. The land continued to be subject to inclement weather involving drought, failed crops, and so food shortages which put the people of God on the edge of starvation. And though they had the temple, nevertheless it seemed empty! The shekinah glory had not returned. It was as if God never really welcomed them back!

And yet not every Jew suffered during this time. For there were the wealthy who at this time seemed to be blessed by God as they grew stronger and wealthier by the month. But that presented a problem as their wealth was gained on the backs of God's people. Accordingly, these were NOT godly individuals, BUT conniving, stingy,

merciless, and demanding. Yet they seemed to be blessed!

And so, for the vast majority of God's people, life in Palestine at this time was brutal! So even though God's word taught that God loved His people, His people's response then (and even now) was, "*You could have fooled me!*" Truly, most of God's people at this time did NOT feel loved by God BUT abandoned by Him!

This is where you and I live at times! And again, the primary reason is that we naturally judge God by what He does. And when we do that, we fall into all manner of grief!

We see it in the life of Asaph. Do you remember where his practical examination of the love of God led in His life? It led to the brink of apostasy — of walking away from God!

Psalm 73:3-5, 12-14, "But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling; my steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant, *as* I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no pains in their death; and their body is fat. They are not in trouble *as other* men; nor are they plagued like mankind... Behold, these are the wicked; and always at ease, they have increased *in* wealth. [Where did this thinking bring him? Listen to v. 12...] Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure, and washed my hands in innocence; for [and here is the result of serving our God of love...] I have been stricken all day long, and chastened every morning."

This is where Asaph's perspective led him, the exact place where God's people were in Malachi's day, perhaps, the very place we are at today! So, what is it that can break us out of this darkness? Notice that which delivered Asaph from his world of gloom.

Psalm 73:16-17, "When I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome in my sight until I came into the sanctuary of God; *then* I perceived their end."

It was only when Asaph took his eyes off of himself and saw the big picture that his faith was rejuvenated!

Not surprisingly, that was God's answer to His people in Malachi's day. His response was to lift their gaze from themselves to the big picture —which brings us to the demonstration of God's love as seen in His love choice.

Malachi 1:2c-3a, "'I have loved you,' says the Lord. But you say, 'How hast Thou loved us?' 'Was not Esau Jacob's brother?' declares the Lord. 'Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau...'"

This is an argument used multiple times in the Bible because it is so powerful! What, practically speaking, is the difference between Esau and Jacob? We know Jacob eventually became the one whom God worked through, AND SO we naturally think it

was on account of something that he either was or did. Yet the history of these two boys clearly demonstrates the opposite! For all sakes and purposes, they were the same:

- They both were children of promise being the heir of Isaac's household!
- They both were born at the same time being twins.
- They both were raised by the same parents... basically in the same way!
- AND they both were wretched sinners!
- Esau was a faithless man who sold his birthright for a pot of stew.

Now as bad as that was, Jacob surpassed Esau in wickedness being a deceiver and supplanter from the start! He was born grasping the heel of his twin brother and would struggle with deceit and manipulation his entire life! From the biblical perspective, Jacob and Esau were one and the same man⁴ — that is the emphasis here! Yet get this: Jacob was saved while Esau perished in his sin! Why? The biblical answer is because of the love of God, period! Speaking to God's people, Moses said this:

Deuteronomy 7:7, "...the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. [Why?] The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples."

In other words, God's love had nothing to do with them! This is stressed over and over again throughout the Bible. We see it in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 9:6, "Know, then, *it is* not because of your righteousness *that* the Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people."

That clearly is the point in Malachi 1, Paul made sure of it. Discussing the issue of the divine election of Jacob over Esau, Paul made this important point:

Romans 9:16: "So then it *does* not *depend* on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy."

So, if it has nothing to do with man, then why does God save anyone? The answer is that it pleases God to love those whom He loves.

Ephesians 1:4b-5, "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, ACCORDING TO the kind intention of His will."

God loves whom He loves because it pleases Him! And such was the case for the people of God in Malachi's day! In eternity past God had chosen to love them. And the result was that in time, they could grapple with God's love as they did here and yet NOT be cast out!

Christian, look at your life and then look at your history! Why are you saved? Why are you here today listening to God's word? It has absolutely nothing to do with you! You are here because God set His love on you!

Do you understand how loved you are of God? I could ask you 100 theological questions into which angels have longed to look in ages past, and you would know the answer!

Before I was saved, I did not know what a chapter or a verse was when it came to the Bible. At the first Bible study I ever attended I was lost when the leader said, "Turn to Romans chapter 4 verse 9!" Such continues this day to be the testimony of billions upon billions of people!

When I was in college, I took a Greek class where one of the students was so ignorant of the Bible, he translated Peter's name literally as "rock" and expressed bewilderment that a rock somehow followed Christ everywhere He went! Yet no one here would make that mistake! Why? Because God has opened your eyes unto a saving knowledge of Christ! And that NOT because of anything that you have done, your heritage, or your intellect, BUT on account of His grace and good pleasure (cf. John 1:12-13)!

Yet there is more. How were God's people to know tangibly that God loved them? God next said, "Lift your eyes and consider the grace that God has given you in your valley of weeping."

[As Seen in His Providential Dealings with Jacob and Esau, Malachi 1:3-4.](#)

Notice this well, it is dangerous to define God's love/character by His providence in your life. But if you must look horizontally, it is imperative that we do it right! That is what is before us, It gazes NOT just upon the difficulties of God's people, BUT the difficulties of all and glorious resulting disparity between the believer and unbeliever!

Malachi 1:3a, "But I have hated Esau..."

When preachers speak of God "hating Esau," they tend to downplay the statement, essentially twisting the text to say that God simply loved Esau less! That is NOT what is said here and in fact eviscerates the point that God is making here!

God hated Esau! Now unlike our understanding of "hate" the text is NOT talking here about an emotion, BUT what is known in theology as the doctrine of preterition! The word means "to pass by" and speaks of God choosing NOT to save Esau, BUT to pass him by, Ian Duguid put it this way:

'Love' in this context is not an emotional feeling, but rather a covenantal term that

expresses the behaviour that flows out of a committed relationship... 'Hate' is the antonym of love and, like the latter, it is a covenantal term that includes the behaviour that flows from a rejection of relationship... The Lord's hatred for Esau is thus a sovereign rejection of him and his offspring from the undeserved privilege of relationship with the Lord for which Jacob has been chosen. (Duguid, 2010, p. 192)

David Strain put it this way:

When [Malachi] speaks of God's hatred of Esau, we're not to think of God's hatred as a spiteful, unreasoned prejudice coloring His actions toward Esau. That is how we hate. But God's hate is judicial, never capricious. It is holy, not vindictive. It is the passing by of sinners, justly withholding undeserved mercy in order to treat them instead strictly as their sin deserves. (Strain, 2016)

That is what God did with Esau, He treated him as his sin deserved! Esau was NOT redemptively blessed in any way AND this came out tangibly in history, specifically in the suffering of Esau in comparison to the suffering of God's people — which is where the next statement takes us.

Malachi 1:3b, speaking of Esau, "...and I have made his mountains a desolation⁵, and *appointed* his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness."

Yes, Israel had a rough go of it. Starting in 605 BC, the nation suffered three exiles, each of which grew in their intensity when it came to the severity and struggle of God's people. The exiles culminated in the destruction of the Theocracy, the death of many, and the transporting of almost all of the remaining population to Babylon! And yet in Babylon, God's people thrived!⁶ The only Jews who would have been sold into slavery were those who bore arms against Babylon. The rest were resettled to live their lives as they chose (cf. Jeremiah 29:4-11)! James Boice wrote:

All God's dealing with Jacob and his descendants was in love. When they were ignorant, he blessed them with a true knowledge of himself. When they were weak and defenseless, he empowered them and shielded them from enemies. When they strayed, he disciplined them. When they persisted in wickedness, he eventually sent the Babylonian captivity, as the prophets had warned he would do over many generations. Then he brought them back to Judah, established them within the walls of a refortified Jerusalem, and had them rebuild the temple. There was blessing and judgment, building and destruction. But in all these things God had loved them and was continuing to work with them in order that they might be a precious and holy people. (Boice, 2006, p. 577)

Yet such was NOT the experience of the Edomites (Esau's children)!⁷ Yes, they rejoiced when Israel fell. In fact, they even participated in the destruction and downfall of God's people (Obadiah 10-14). But at this time Edom was made a vassal nation of

Babylon in which as a nation they had to adopt the gods of Babylon as well as pay enormous amounts of tribute! From this point on, the Edomites were never the same such that 70 years later when God's people returned to the Promised land, the Edomites were a decimated people! Yet, listen to what they said:

Malachi 1:4, "Though Edom says, 'We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins'; thus says the Lord of hosts, 'They may build, but I will tear down; and *men* will call them the wicked territory [literally, the cursed territory], and the people toward whom the Lord is indignant forever.'"

The translation here is incredibly weak. The text actually is saying that Edom would remain under God's wrath and curse forever! Now historically speaking, how did this work its way out? Sometime during the fifth century BC (In other words, about the time of the writing of the book of Malachi), the Nabatean kingdom attacked Edom. These descendants of Esau were dispossessed from their home (the area we know today as Petra) and eventually forced to settle in the *wilderness* south of Palestine (the area became known as Idumea in the days of Christ)!⁸ Here they stayed until 70 AD at which time they were wiped out of existence as a people!⁹

From this one sees that the lot of the Edomites was tragic! Though Jacob and Esau were one and the same in every way, the difference in their history tells a different tale. Esau's speaks of the wrath and curse of God. Jacob's speaks of the love of God which has preserved them to the present day where you and I are named among his posterity!

So, did God love Jacob? Does He love you and me? If by that you mean, is He a Santa Clause figure who lives to bless us for being nice? Then no! But if by that you mean, did He preserve His people such that for the past 2,500 years they have been in the presence of God worshipping and enjoying Him? The answer is, "*Yes! God loved them to the utmost?!*"

Christian, don't miss the point! Trial and difficulty descend upon all. "In the world we have tribulation" (John 16:33)! Yet the difference between the blessings we discover in the valley of weeping in comparison to the non-Christian demonstrates the glorious love and mercy of God! Paul put it this way:

Romans 8:35-37 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, 'For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' [Such has been the testimony of God's people throughout Redemptive History, and most recently in Afghanistan] But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us."

That is the love of God! And that is what God will do through you regardless of what comes against you in life! That is the message God gave His people.¹⁰ Yet God is NOT

finished. If you and I would lift our eyes from ourselves, look through the veil of tears (which is this world), and gaze upon the salvation of God, we would NOT question God's love BUT worship the Lord in light of it! Notice the final proof of God's love for us.

As Seen in His Providential Dealings Beyond Jacob and Esau, v. 5.

Malachi 1:5, "And your eyes will see this [See what? The horrible consequence of God's hate when it came to the Edomites and the love of God for His people by comparison!] and you will say, 'The Lord be magnified beyond the border of Israel!'¹¹"

This is a powerful statement. By lifting their eyes to behold what happens when a people truly are NOT loved by God (as in the Edomites), the result is that God's people naturally extend this examination to other nations and peoples! And when we do that, what happens? We get more examples of the disparity between what we receive on account of God's love and what others receive on account of His wrath! And what is the conclusion we will draw as a result? *"The Lord be magnified! Oh, how He loves you and me!"*

A couple of years ago, a Christian businessman who had just returned from Asia described the horrible condition of many young teenage girls that he saw on the streets whose only hope of survival was through prostitution. Many of these girls wouldn't live to see their twentieth birthday! This stood out to me because at the time I had a daughter who was 14. When he shared with me this horrible reality, all I could think of was the difference between my daughter and those girls. And what ultimately is the difference, the love of God!

It is so easy in our myopia to gaze upon our lives and feel that we have received the short end of the stick. *I thought God loved me?*

Yet when we consider just for a moment the difference that God's love has and will make in our lives, we ought to be ashamed that we could ever doubt God's love. Yes, Christians die of cancer and suffer tragedy just like the non-Christian. Yet the difference is that we are never alone BUT are accompanied by the Lord of glory! Robert Murray McCheyne gave a fitting summary of God's exhortation to His people in the text before us, speaking of the last day:

When I hear the wicked call on the rocks and hills to fall, when I see them start and shrink on the fiery deluge brink, then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe."

When I stand before the throne, dressed in beauty not my own, when I see thee as thou art, love thee with unsinning heart, then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then, how much I owe. (Great Commission Publications, 1990)¹²

Christian, we need not wait until glory to meditate upon all that is ours in Christ on account of God's love! May God give us the grace to do it today!

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End Note(s)

¹ "It is striking too, that the prophet begins his message with a reaffirmation of the electing love of God for his people, before he begins to condemn their sins and failures. He starts with a reminder of the truth of the gospel before he applies the law to them." (Duguid, 2010, p. 197)

² Notice some of the elements of this love: (1) It is an Infinite Love. Psalm 103:10-11 says, "He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him." How high are the heavens above the earth? If we were to move at the speed of light directly away from the earth, how long could we travel before we reached the end of the galaxy? More than a lifetime! Christian, God loves you beyond that! That means that if God has set His love upon you, you will be His beloved for the rest of eternity! Notice (2) It is an Eternal Love. Romans 8:29a says, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son..." The word for "foreknew" is not foresight but fore-love! This text tells us that before the world began, God set His love upon us in Christ! In fact, we read about it in Ephesians 1:4-5a where we read that God "...chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world [the word for 'chose' is the same word used as the root in the word to 'forelove'] that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself..." Truly, from eternity, God has loved you! Lastly notice (3) It is an Unchangeable Love! Romans 5:8-10 says, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. [Now think through what this means! It means that God's redeeming love will never change...] Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Truly, the universal testimony of Scripture is that God in Christ has loved you to the utmost and so will continue to love you no matter what!

³ "The people's challenge may not necessarily be a verbatim citation of an actual response, but it clearly represents the world view of the prophet's hearers, whether or not their thoughts

were expressed aloud.” (Duguid, 2010, p. 190)

⁴ “Neither Jacob nor Esau deserved God’s love, before or after it was bestowed on Jacob. In fact, both thoroughly deserved to be ‘hated’- rejected and cast off- by God, with all the consequences that flow from that decision. For his part, Esau despised the birthright that ought to have been his and regarded it as something of so little value that he traded it for a bowl of soup (Genesis 25:29–34). Meanwhile, Jacob sought to trick and manipulate his way into the blessing that the Lord had promised him, instead of trusting God to provide it by faith (Genesis 27).” (Duguid, 2010, pp. 192-193)

⁵ “The name by which Edom is to be known, the wicked country, contrasts with the name given by Zechariah to Judah, ‘the holy land’ (Zechariah 2:12). Whereas Judah would be cleansed (Zechariah 5:5–11), Edom would be the people with whom the Lord is angry for ever, a terrible judgment, which should cause Judah in all humility to be thankful for God’s love to her. Malachi is undoubtedly aware of Ezekiel’s prophecy concerning Edom (Ezekiel 35), with ‘desolation’ (Heb. *šēmāmâ*) as its leitmotiv. Malachi uses the same word in verse 3 ‘laid waste his hill country’, and ‘perpetual desolation’ (Ezekiel 35:9) suggests the continuing rebuke ‘for ever’ at the end of this verse.” (Baldwin, 1972, p. 241)

⁶ “God’s people flourished in exile: (1) They became a separate people who did not want to become like their neighbors ever again. The Pharisees came from this era of Jewish history. (2) They became pure monotheistic, giving up idolatry completely. (3) They developed theological literature and renewed interest in the Law of Moses. (4) They repented of their sins against Yahweh. (5) The synagogues were established as a place of worship, centered on God’s Word, prayer, praise, and study. (6) Judaism became personal rather than a formal ritualism. (7) They became a missionary people to all the nations. (8) During this time God placed a longing for the coming of the Messiah in their hearts (which was fostered and fueled by the Maccabean revolt). (Tidwell, 1925, p. 178)

⁷ The backdrop for this prophecy is Ezekiel 35–36. Ezekiel 35 contains a prophecy against Mount Seir, the ancestral home of Edom, declaring that her towns will be made into ruins (*horbâ*) and desolate (*šēmāmâ*, Ezekiel 35:3–4) because she rejoiced when the inheritance (*naḥalâ*) of the house of Israel was made desolate (Ezekiel 35:15). Yet the Lord promised that he would cleanse Israel of their sins, return them to their homeland and rebuild the ruins (Ezekiel 36:33). There was a future for the Lord’s people beyond his historical acts of judgement. In contrast, Edom’s self-confidence that they could bounce back from current setbacks and restore their former glory was unfounded. Whatever they rebuilt, the Lord would once again ‘tear down’.” (Duguid, 2010, pp. 194-195)

⁸ By the time Malachi was writing, Jerusalem had been restored and the temple rebuilt for some sixty or seventy years... Meanwhile invaders from the desert, Nabateans (1 Macc. 5:25), had ransacked Edomite territory, forcing its population to take refuge in the Negev, to the south of Judah. Their country, later known as Idumea (1 Macc. 4:29; 5:65; Mark 3:8), had Hebron as its capital. When the Nabatean invasion took place is not known, but it may have been as early as the sixth century, and this means that it is likely to have happened before the time of Malachi. It was the Nabateans who built Petra, the city in the cliffs, which seems to have been begun during the fourth century BC.” (Baldwin, 1972, pp. 240-241)

⁹ “Judah had experienced the curses of the Sinai covenant because of their sin, culminating in exile. Edom was about to experience the same severe judgement of God, which itself was the fulfilment of earlier prophecy. The difference between the two peoples is not whether they experience trials and difficulties in this world, but whether those trials and difficulties terminate in their destruction, or whether they have a future beyond the judgement.” (Duguid, 2010, p. 196)

¹⁰ It is because of this that Paul was overwhelmed by the grace of God which was availed to him in the crucible. He wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10: “And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me- to keep me from exalting myself! Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ [Did you get that? When we go through the valley of weeping, Christ goes before us such that it becomes a spring! As such, the universal

testimony of Christians going through is that of Paul's...] Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." Non-Christians don't say such things for they don't have a God who walks with them in the valley of suffering! Yet we do! And when we lift our gaze just a little to behold the love of God, our affections are turned upside down. ¶ Recall how Asaph mentality as he began Psalm 73, struggling with the justice and goodness of God. Yet when he lifted his eyes unto the Lord, he caught a glimpse at God's glorious will and purpose for each one of us such that he closed the Psalm with these words in vv. 25-26, "Whom have I in heaven *but Thee*? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. For, behold, those who are far from Thee will perish; Thou hast destroyed all those who are unfaithful to Thee. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good [NOT wealth, ease of days, health, or anything else this world might offer! As a result...]; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Thy works."

¹¹ "If Israel were more outward-looking she would come closer to a knowledge of God's love, and see, by contrast with the experiences of other nations, how wonderfully God had dealt with her." (Baldwin, 1972, p. 241)

¹² I also would imagine that at the awards banquet in eternity future, when we sit at the table of the Lord and there behold Christ in His beauty, the description given by Isaac Watts will be quite accurate, "While all our hearts and all our songs join to admire the feast, each of us cry, with thankful tongues, 'Lord, why was I a guest?' ¶ 'Why was I made to hear Thy voice, and enter while there's room, when thousands make a wretched choice, and rather starve than come?' ¶ 'Twas the same love that spread the feast that sweetly drew us in; else we had still refused to taste, and perished in our sin." (Great Commission Publications, 1990, p. 469)