

# AM Deuteronomy 7:1-13 & Malachi 1:1-5 The Love of God

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[ 0 : 00 ]     7, commencing to read at verse 1. It's page 182 in the Church Bible. And this is Moses talking to the people of Israel.

Deuteronomy chapter 7. When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves, and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction.

You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods.

Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you and he would destroy you quickly. But thus shall you deal with them. You shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their asherim and burn their carved images with fire.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

[ 1 : 44 ]     It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you. For you are the fewest of all peoples. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations and repays to their face those who hate him by destroying them.

He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.

And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. He will love you, bless you, and multiply you.

He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.

[ 3 : 12 ]     So it reads God's word. Amen. Again, we're going to be looking at the book of Malachi this morning. But we'll read just the first five verses of chapter one before we sing again.

So Malachi chapter one. It's on page 968 in the church Bible. And we're just going to be reading the first five verses. This is the passage that we'll be considering in more detail as we open God's word this morning.

So Malachi chapter one, starting at verse one. The Oracle of the Word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, says the Lord.

But you say, how have you loved us? Is not Esau Jacob's brother, declares the Lord? Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated.

I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert. If Edom says, we are shattered, but we will rebuild the ruins.

[ 4 : 26 ] The Lord of hosts says, they may build, but I will tear down. And they will be called the wicked country. And the people with whom the Lord is angry forever.

Your own eyes shall see this. And you shall say, great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel.

Amen. I'll return with me this morning then to this book of Malachi, which we read from just a few moments ago. A few words of introduction about Malachi, the book.

It was probably written around 460 BC, sometime after the Jews had been allowed to come from captivity in Babylon, and they'd been allowed to come back and to rebuild the temple.

It's likely that the prophecy, it was at a contemporary time to the prophets Ezra and Nehemiah. And that's around about 80 years after Haggai and Zechariah were active prophets.

[ 5 : 33 ] There's a bit of discussion about the name of the author, because in Hebrew, Malachi means my messenger. And there are those who said that the name should be treated just as a generic thing, should be translated as my messenger rather than as a name as such.

But I think on balance and following the pattern of the other prophecies that we have in the Old Testament, it seems likely to me that Malachi, whilst it means my messenger, was also the name of the author of this book.

Now the book is a prophecy, a prophecy in perhaps the wider sense of that word. We often think of prophecy as being something foretelling the future. But in the way of the Old Testament, prophecy is a message from God to his people.

And verse 1 makes that very clear to us. This is the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. In other words, the prophet is delivering God's word.

And there are many references throughout this book about this being God's word to the people. In other words, this is not Malachi's thoughts and ideas. This is not Malachi who is just speaking his own things to the people.

[ 6 : 46 ] But this is a message to the people through the prophet from God. The Hebrew word that's translated orion here in verse 1, it can sometimes be translated as burden, is usually to signify that this is not just a prophecy about the future, but this is a prophecy which is bringing some judgment from God to his people.

This is a burden that the prophet has been given. It's been placed upon them by God. And it's a message that they have to deliver. It may be a hard message. It's no fun, is it, to take a difficult message to anybody in life.

So it's perhaps a hard message for the prophet to have to deliver, but they must deliver this message. And it's a message of warning and judgment. It's a heavy responsibility, you see, that the prophet feels.

And he has to discharge this responsibility. And I think for us to understand any of the Old Testament prophets who are described as having a burden, we need to grasp this.

We need to understand this sense of responsibility that they feel, this need that they have to make known the message of God to his people.

[ 8 : 04 ] Because, you see, that's the only way that they can lift from their shoulders this burden that God has placed upon them. And as a bit of an aside, really, but we can apply that, I think, to our own times today.

I think anybody who says they feel called to the ministry, anybody who stands to preach to God's people, they should feel this sense of burden. They should feel this sense of burden from the Lord, a heavy sense of burden.

You see, because preaching isn't a job. Preaching is not just a talk. It's not just a chat. It's not just a bit of a teaching session.

But when a man stands to preach, and when a man ministers to a church, it's a message of the Lord for his people today, isn't it? And that, you see, that should be a burden to the preacher.

The preacher should have a sense of responsibility that they have to discharge in the service of God to his people. And I would suggest you can't understand a true preacher of the gospel unless you understand and realize that there is something pressing on their spirits and their consciences, something pressing on their minds and their hearts, and it has to be lifted by discharging of that responsibility to preach God's word and to make it known to his people.

[ 9 : 30 ] I think I would go so far as to say that anybody who is standing in a pulpit and preaching who doesn't feel that sense of responsibility probably shouldn't be preaching.

And indeed, you see, for Malachi, the overall message of the book is a judgment from God on the way that the people have strayed away from his ways.

The Judah to which God's message is being delivered is not a happy place. The exiles returned. They returned with great optimism from captivity.

They built the temple. And that optimism that they had had started to evaporate. Temple worship had been re-established, that is true, but it had become abused.

The pagan cultures from the countries around them were starting to come in, exerting bad influences. There were promises that God had made and the people were seeing and remembering the promises up to a point but saying, we're not seeing these promises being fulfilled.

[ 10 : 33 ] And they were becoming critical of God. They were becoming increasingly vocal in their criticisms of God. And it's into this kind of an atmosphere then that Malachi brings this prophecy from God.

He brings this message from God to challenge the people of God and their ways. And it's a challenge for them to live out their lives in a way that shows that they are indeed God's people.

that they are in a right relationship with God. The style of the prophecy, the prophet, doesn't really hold anything back. It's sometimes been described as a bit confrontational.

But you see, this is an urgent message. This is an important message. He has every right to be confrontational in that sense, in a right way.

We can break the book down into six sections. Six sections where the prophet is bringing God's message to the people. Six debates, as they're sometimes referred to.

[ 11 : 39 ] Six places where the prophet brings a message from the Lord and then the people dispute it. They basically say, we don't believe this message.

And then each time, God, through the prophet, responds and he sets out the truth in no uncertain terms. And the purpose of the debates, what is the purpose of the book?

Well, it's to bring God's people back to him. So this morning, we're going to look at the first of these six debates. And then this evening, we're going to look at the second of them.

The first is verses 2 to 5 that we just read. It's the shortest of all of the debates in Malachi. In many ways, it's a scene setter. I'd hesitate to say that it's the most important of the debates, but it is absolutely foundational to what follows in the book.

Now this evening, the second debate is the longest of all the debates in Malachi. So we'll worship. And we'll see tonight that there may be a reason why it's one of the longest.

[ 12 : 42 ] Because it's, again, it's very important how we worship God. More of that later on. So the first debate then, it's in the first five verses.

Really starts at verses 2, verse 2 through to 5. And it's a debate about the love of God. And the first thing to notice then is God's statement.

God's setting out the first debate, so to speak. There in verse 2, I have loved you, says the Lord. Now this is a statement of affirmation.

It could have been translated as, I do love you. And it is God speaking to his chosen people, people who strayed away from him.

And he's affirming to them, I love you. He's saying, despite your waywardness, I love you. It's affirmation, you see.

[ 13 : 37 ] Now, there's a lot of passages, aren't there, in the Old and New Testaments that talk about God's love for his people. Back in Deuteronomy 7 that we read earlier. You have Moses there.

He's speaking to the children of Israel. They're preparing to enter the Promised Land. And he reminds them that they're God's people. Why? Well, because God chose them.

And why were they chosen? Well, it's all there in that passage we read in Deuteronomy. He says, it's not because you were the largest of nations. Because, in fact, you were the smallest of nations, he says.

It's not because you did anything to deserve God's favour. No. He chose them because he loved them. He sovereignly chose the people of Israel to be his people and set his love on them.

He didn't have to do that. But he did. And similarly, then, in the New Testament, we have passages about the love of God, don't we? For instance, we've got God's love to the church is there in Ephesians 5, where we're told that Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

[ 14 : 44 ] The same passage tells us that Christ loves the church in the way that a bridegroom should love a bride. We've got one of the most famous verses in the Bible, too, John 3, 16.

What's that about? Well, it's about the love of God, isn't it? For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

And we can confidently say this morning that not only has the Lord God loved his people in the past, both distant past and more recent past, not only has he loved his people here in this church, if you're one of God's people this morning, he's loved you.

And not only has he loved his people in other churches that we can see around our country, where the gospel is faithfully preached and the church is going on.

Not only has he loved his people around the world, and we all know churches, I'm sure, in different parts of the world, or know of them. But right now, not only has he loved, but right now he does love.

[ 15 : 53 ] Right now he does love his people here in this church. And he will always love his people. And we can say that confidently.

It's a love that goes on into eternity, you see. It's a past love, it's a present love, and it's a future love. God loves his people. Now, of course, there's a key question for us here this morning, isn't there?

And that is, are we members of this church of God? Are we one of God's people? Are you and I members of the church of Jesus Christ? The bride of Christ?

Have we come to him in repentance and faith? And that's a key question for each one of us, I think, here this morning. Because if we are, then we are loved as a member of that church, if we're his people.

You and I are individual members of the church. And God loves the church. And God loves the individual members of the church. And we'll love forever.

[ 16 : 54 ] There's a hymn, an old hymn that has a line in it that says, O love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul in thee. Can we say that? Can we say that we can rest in God's love because we know God's love?

If you're a Christian here this morning, you should be able to say that. We should be able to say that with real belief. We need to remember, you see, if we're believers, that God loved you so much that he sent his son into the sinful world, that he would die for you.

He would take the punishment for your sins upon himself. That in love he called you. He took the first step. He called you. He sent his spirit into your heart.

And when you became a believer, he did the work of salvation. Not you. God did it because he loved you. And you know, the fact that God loves his people is not just some sort of philosophical statement.

It's not just some kind of religious doctrine. But it's an objective reality, isn't it? If you're a Christian here this morning, then you know the objective reality as your inner experience.

[ 18 : 09 ] You've experienced God's love in your life, haven't you? And God wants us to know more and more about God's love in our lives. And that growth, you know, it comes how?

Well, it comes as we seek with the help of the Holy Spirit to live lives that are honouring to God. That bring honour to him as we turn away from sin. As we diligently use the means of grace that God has given to us.

As we, you know, seek to meet with his people wherever possible. As we are doing here this morning. We're worshipping him, aren't we? We're reading his word. We're praying to him. And we ask God that he would give us more and more of a measure of his spirit in our lives.

Day by day. That he would show us more of his love. Show us more of his love that is displayed to us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the work that Christ has done for us. And you see, in this first part of the debate, God is saying to his people, I love you.

[ 19 : 16 ] It's an affirming statement. I love you. But what happens? How do the people respond? So secondly, how do these people respond to the statement of God's affirming of his love?

Well, it's there in verse 2. How have you loved us, they see? What are they doing? Well, they're questioning God. They're questioning God's love. God says, I love you. And they're saying, well, how?

How have you loved us? It's an impudence, almost. It's a throwing back in God's face. His statement of love for them.

It was plain, you see, to see how God had loved them. All they needed to do was exercise their memories. If they exercised their memories, they could look back over their history and they could see God's love to them and for them.

It was true, yes, there were times that God had punished them for their waywardness. But it was always a punishment in love.

[ 20 : 18 ] It was always a punishment designed to restore them to God. To restore them to being his people who loved him and worshipped him. But you see, here they are.

God's people. And they're complaining and they're ungrateful. How have you loved us, they say? How? And in verses 2 to 5, God answers them in no uncertain terms.

And what does he do? Well, he takes them back in their history. And he says, all right, let's go back to Jacob. Let's go back to Esau. Let's talk about your history.

This is how I'm going to show my love. I sovereignly chose you as my people. This is a display of my love. Both Jacob and Esau were descendants of Abraham.

Both were born to the same parents, to Isaac. They were twins. But Esau was the firstborn. And Jacob was the second.

[ 21 : 18 ] Esau was the one who naturally should have been the one who was the favoured one. The one who had the birthright. Abraham was chosen by God.

He and Sarah were given the gift of a son, Isaac. He was to be the heir of Abraham. And his disciples were the heir of Abraham. But then from the very same family, you see, the family that God had chosen, you have these twin brothers.

But one is chosen by God. And the other is not. Now from a human perspective, we could say Esau was very foolish.

He sold his birthright just to satisfy his hunger. I'm sure many of you will know the story of what happened there. He was foolish.

But you see, the most important thing is this. The most important thing is that God made a sovereign choice to place his love and his care upon Jacob and not upon Esau.

[ 22 : 21 ] And God says to the people here, weren't Jacob and Esau brothers? You know they were. Of course you know your history. You know they were. You know who was the firstborn.

And you know who are the descendants of Jacob, don't you? It's you, isn't it? And you also know something else. You know what's happened to the descendants of Esau.

They've been decimated. So how do you explain that, God is saying? That's what he's saying to these people. How do you explain that? And the explanation he gives to the people? Jacob have I loved.

And Esau have I hated. You see, my love for you, says God. You as Jacob's descendants. It was shown right back then in my choice of Jacob to be the object of my love.

Now, we might ask the question. If these people had memories and they knew their history, and I'm sure they did know their history, why did Israel question God's love for them? Well, we can look back to Deuteronomy again, I think, to get us the answer to that.

[ 23 : 27 ] And it's the chapter after the one we were reading. Chapter 8 this time. And it's Moses speaking to the children of Israel as they prepared to cross the Jordan again. And what do we read?

We read this. Moses goes on.

Take care lest you forget the Lord your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes which I command you. Lest when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up and you forget the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought out water from the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manner that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you and do you good in the end.

Beware lest you say in your heart, my power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth. And surely this is the point with the Israelites here, that they'd indeed forgotten what God had done for them.

They knew their history but they'd forgotten what God had done for them. They were convinced that what they had was down to themselves and not down to God. I think we need to learn lessons from this, don't we?

[ 25 : 14 ] How often do we find that we forget what God has done for us? That we forget that God loved us? I think forgetfulness, you know, is at the root of many of our problems in terms of our relationship with God and our daily living.

Once we forget, whether it be an oversight of forgetfulness, forgetfulness or whether it be an act of forgetting, wanting to forget.

Once we forget that God is good to us, that not just good to us as a church, but he's good to me as a member of God's family.

Not just that he's good to everybody in a general sense that, you know, it rains and it sun shines, the harvest happens, we all have food and all the rest of it. Just, yes, there is general goodness that God shows to the world.

It's common grace. But once we forget that he's good to me, we're in trouble. We're in trouble. Because we're in danger of becoming like these people here in Malachi.

[ 26 : 21 ] Doubting the love of God. Being disdainful, indeed, disdainful of the love of God. If you're a Christian here this morning, don't ever forget God's love for you. Remember that it wasn't us that sought the Lord.

He came to us in his sovereign love. He came looking for us. If ever we can look back on a time and we can say we felt ourselves seeking after him, it was because he loved us.

It was because he put that desire in us. It wasn't us. And he loved us not because there was anything that made us worthy of his love in us either. He looked on us and what did he see?

Well, he saw sinners. He saw sinners deserving of hell and punishment. But he loved us. He chose us. He opened our eyes to our sinfulness.

He showed us the Lord Jesus Christ who died for us. He loved us. If you're a Christian, why are you here in church this morning? Well, it's because God in his graciousness touched you and laid hold of you and he brought you to himself.

[ 27 : 29 ] And when we leave this place this morning, we should go out thinking how privileged we are that we've been able to meet again, once again, with God's people.

Because we're sinners. Because we're sinners. But we're saved by grace, aren't we? And it's a grace which extends right back into eternity past. And it's a grace that was revealed to us in time.

That we believe and we might find salvation. You know, it's true that as Christians we have a duty to be here. Week by week on a Sunday, on the Lord's Day.

Week by week we have a duty to be here. To be among God's people. But you know, if that's all it is to you, being here, a matter of duty, then you've forgotten God's goodness and love towards you.

And that's a terrible sin. And you see, here in verse 2, as the people questions God's love for them. After all, you know, they were doing their duty in temple worship.

[ 28 : 36 ] God had to remind them. God had to remind them of his love. And, you know, we should be here not just because of our duty.

But we should be here in a response to God's love for us. And the reason we're here is because we love God. That's our response to his love.

It's good, isn't it, for children to be obedient. And we always like to see obedient children. You can see it with dogs too. If you have a pet, here's a dog. If they're obedient, that's great.

If they're a bit wild, that's not so great. But what's all that rooted in? Well, it should be rooted in the love of the child for the parents and in the love of the dog for the owner. And that's us in our response to God.

That's us in our duty that we do. That's us in our duty that we do towards God. It should be a response of love. Our obedience is a response of love to God.

[ 29 : 41 ] So, first time we had God's love affirmed. Secondly, the people questioned. They doubt God's love. But thirdly, we see God going beyond showing the people how he chose them.

And saying, I place my love upon you and choosing you. To express how contrast his love for them compared to his dealings with the descendants of Esau, the Edomites.

And it's rather as if God is saying, I love you. I chose you. And if you still don't really understand what that means, let me show you what happens to the people I don't love.

Verse 3. How's God dealt with the descendants of Esau? I've laid waste his hill country, says God, and left his heritage to jackals of the desert, says God. That's how he's dealt with the descendants of Esau.

Now, it's thought that the Edomites were first conquered around 500 BC by some Arabs, the Nabatian Arabs. But it wasn't the end of them.

[ 30 : 43 ] And verse 4 says there, they looked to recover, to build themselves up again. But God tells the Israelites that his judgment of the Edomites will continue. Just as his love for his people will endure.

So, in contrast, his judgment of the Edomites will endure. Did that happen? Well, yes, it did. They tried to build themselves up. But they were conquered again around about 100 BC.

And they were subjugated. And they mixed in with other people groups around them. Their territory was laid waste by the Romans around 68 AD. And that effectively was the end of the Edomites.

They basically disappeared as a nation group. And you see, God is telling the people of Israel this to show them what happens to people who are not loved by him.

You question my love for you, he said. You still exist. I've promised an enduring legacy for you, my people. How can you question my love?

[ 31 : 46 ] Look at what happens to those who are not the object of my love. What a contrast. Edom on the one hand, in a displeasure of God.

Under judgment from God. And Israel on the other hand, loved by God and enjoying the many benefits of his blessings towards them. What a contrast.



Well, how do we apply that to ourselves here today? And I think if you're a Christian here this morning, there's a lesson here that is the source not only of our joy.

It should be the source of our joy. But it should also be the source of great humility. We have been. We are. We always will be loved by God.

And that's our joy. It should be the source of a Christian's joy. Anyway, but as we consider this contrast that God shows between Israel and Edom, we're surely driven to see the contrast between the Christian and the non-believer, the world around us that has turned away from God.

[ 32 : 50 ] Hasn't a thought for God. And that contrast, you see, must be what? Well, that must be a source of humility for us, I would suggest. We should be humbled by God's sovereign choice.

Humbled by his love for us. I wonder, if you look at non-Christians, people around you, do you think how stupid they are? Do you think perhaps, if only they knew what I knew.

If only they discovered for themselves what I discovered in the Bible. Or perhaps you think, if only they got the sense to come to church. I mean, why are you not here?

Come on. Get sensible. Maybe you're perhaps even proud of the fact that you're a Christian, and they're not. Now, brothers and sisters, if that's us, then it ought not to be.

Ought it. You see, the contrast between the Christian and the unbeliever, the contrast between Israel and the Edomites, it should make us humble.

[ 33 : 56 ] But it should also do something else. It should fill us with compassion. Compassion for the lost. You know, in humility, we thank God that he looked on us, and he saw us in our desperate condition, worthy of nothing but punishment, and nothing but hell.

Slaves to sin. And yet, he showed us the Lord Jesus Christ. And he loved us. And he gave us repentance, and he gave us faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins.

You see, he did that for us. He adopted us as his children into his family. It was his love, his love for us. And we should be humble about that, shouldn't we? But you see, he was compassionate towards us, and we should look on others with compassion.

As God was compassionate to us, we should look on others with compassion. We should pray that God would help us to be compassionate to the lost world, to others, to help us to show out the love of God to others around us, to spread abroad the good news that we have, the good news of the gospel, the good news that people need to hear.

And we should do that because we have compassion for people. We should be wanting to tell people that there is a God of love who said that there is forgiveness of sin through Christ, and that all who truly believe on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[ 35 : 23 ] That's the good news of the gospel, isn't it? And we remember that we've been forgiven, and we have the knowledge of God, we've been reconciled to our maker through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But we remember that, that we can show compassion to others. It's not something to make us proud. It's something to make us humble. It's something to make us show compassion to others.

As we see the world around us, many people even this morning coming here to church, you would have seen people doing their own thing this morning.

Whatever they were up to, off shopping, off going out for a walk, whatever it is, but with no thought of God. No thought of God. But we need to remember what God has done for us.

It should make us humble, but it should make us compassionate to those people that we see, those people we interact with day by day, who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ. But fourthly and finally, there's another truth here in this debate between God and the Israelites that we can note.

[ 36 : 34 ] And it's this. God's love will be vindicated. God's love will be vindicated. Look at verse 5. Your own eyes shall see this, says God, and you shall say, Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel.

Now this is talking about the prophecy of verse 4, about the destruction of the Edomites. As we have already noted, it was a prophecy that came true and to full fruition by AD 68.

And you see, the fulfillment of that prophecy is a vindication of God's love. You see, there are two ways in which God's love will be vindicated and two ways in which we will see God's love vindicated.

The first is, in the mighty works of judgment that he's going to perform. Beyond the border of Israel, things that people will see, things that we can see in history, things that we can see in the church of the New Testament and beyond the church of the New Testament, right up to current days, the proud nations that have arisen, the pharaohs, the Egyptians, the Edoms, the many nations who've risen and fallen under the judgment of God, the Hitlers and Stalins of this world, the atheists of this world, to the end of time, religions, people, governments, will rise up against God and against the church.

But God will judge them. God will judge them. God will bring them down. And God will be magnified to all the world.

[ 38 : 28 ] You see, God's love will be vindicated. And his righteous judgment, his vindication of that, and his mercy to his people, his vindication of God's love.

But his love is also vindicated, I would suggest to you, in the lives of his people. Just as it was in the lives of the Israelites here in Malachi. And, you know, with our own eyes, we can see this.

Can we not? He chooses his people. He redeems his people. He brings us from the slavery of Egypt to the promised land.

Just as he did with his people of old in the Old Testament. From the slavery of Egypt to the promised land. And it's a land where there was milk and honey. And it's a land, a promised land for us as the church of Christ today.

It's a land where we can feed on the scriptures. It's a land of milk and honey. Where we can feed on God's word. Now, he may chasten us.

[ 39 : 33 ] He may need to chasten us. He may need to reprove us. He may need to correct us. He perhaps sends us into situations sometimes in life that are situations of testing.

Testing where perhaps we're reminded of our own weakness. Because we're frail, created human beings. And he has to remind us of that sometimes. So that we lean more on him.

And not rely in our own strength. And if you're a Christian here this morning, you know this, don't you? I'm not telling you anything new that you don't know. Because you've lived this experience in your own lives.

You can see it with your own eyes in your life. And you can see it in the lives of other believers too. This is a thing you can see. And you see, this is a vindication of God's love.

Love in the lives of believers. We can see it. It's not just a concept. We can see it. And your own eyes shall see this, says the prophet.

[ 40 : 35 ] God through the prophet. And you shall say, great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel. And we can see that in our own lives.

And it should bring that praise from our lips as we see the vindication of God's love in our lives and in the lives of others in the church. Great is the Lord.

Great is the Lord beyond the border of Israel. So this first debate then, Malachi, the first five verses, God's love is affirmed.

And assured. And we can be confident as God's people today that God loves us and God did love us. He does now and he always will love us. We see God's love questioned by the complaining people.

And we have to say, may that never ever be us. May we never ever be those who question the love of God. And then we see God answering, explaining how did he love them, that he chose them.

[ 41 : 36 ] And we need to remember too that God chose us. We should never forget that. We don't want God to have to remind us that he's the one who chose us as he had to remind his people in days gone by.

And then we see God contrasting his love for the children of Israel with the judgment of the Edomites. And it's contrasted there to demonstrate to them his love for them and the power of his love.

And as we see that contrast in our own day, we should be humble and we should be compassionate to others as we see the world around us with no thought of God. And then as the debate ends then as we've seen, God's love will be vindicated and we can see with our own eyes as we've already said, how that is taking place in our own day.

We can see it looking back in the history of the world to see how people have come and gone and people have raised themselves up against God and against the church and God has dealt with them and God has brought them down and God has humbled them and God has destroyed them on occasions.

But we can see in our own lives the way that God's love is vindicated. So as we close then, let's not be forgetful of the goodness of God towards us.

[ 43 : 00 ] Because if we're forgetful then we may find ourselves on the end of a message from God as the children of Israel found themselves on the end of a message through Malachi from God.

And you see, if we're forgetful of his goodness towards us, then we become forgetful of the love. Because it's the love of God that lies behind his goodness.

So when we pray, we should pray with remembrance and we should pray with thanksgiving. Let's be mindful at all times of the Saviour who suffered for us, the Saviour who died for us.

He did that willingly. We give thanks to God for his unspeakable gift, the gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's own Son that he gave for our salvation. We need to remember that.

We need to give thanks. Remember that unspeakable gift because it's through that that all other blessings are given and enjoyed. There's a gift given by God's sovereign and undeserved love.

[ 44 : 01 ] And may God help us to have such a memory of his goodness that we can't forgive for us. May our remembrance of his love bring out for us praise for his name. May our praises for God never ever die.

And may we be kept from ever saying in that insolent and complaining way that the children of Israel did here. Well, how have you loved us? Because as I say, if we say that, we might find God needs to remind us in painful ways.

Because he will remind us as he did to the Israelites. He'll remind us of all the ways he's blessed us, he's cared for us, he's loved us down through the ages. He'll humble us, he'll make us realize that God indeed is loving his people.

And it's a love, you see, that won't let us go. Or never let us go. And for that, we may, should, we must, always, thank God.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.