

## **“Does God Really Love Me?”**

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Scriptural Foundation: Malachi 1:1-5, NIV

<sup>1</sup> An oracle: The word of the LORD to Israel through Malachi.

### **Jacob Loved, Esau Hated**

<sup>2</sup> "I have loved you," says the LORD.

"But you ask, 'How have you loved us?'"

"Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

<sup>4</sup> Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins."

But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish. They will be called the Wicked Land, a people always under the wrath of the LORD. <sup>5</sup> You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the LORD -even beyond the borders of Israel!'"

A burning question pressed constantly upon my mind when I was a senior in high school. This question often turned me into knots during the day and sometimes kept me awake thinking about it at night. I wish I could tell you that this question was deeply theological, such as, "How can we reconcile God's absolute sovereignty with man's responsibility?" Or, I wish I could tell you that this question was profoundly sociological, such as, "How do we care for the poor in compassion while elevating the dignity of work and family commitment?" My question was much more personal. The question that I turned over and over in my mind as an eighteen year old was this, "Do she love me?" I had begun dating a girl named Kimberly and she was really hard to read. She held her cards close to the vest and she didn't let me see them very often. She was a young lady who did not believe that a girl should be an initiator in a dating relationship, or the leader, so she didn't ask me to come and see her. Indeed, she wouldn't even telephone me unless there was some time-sensitive information to convey to me. I had to read this trail of clues. I tried to read her eyes whether there was sparkle or affirmation behind them. One day she gave me a birthday card, in my senior year of high school, and at the bottom of that card, after writing a few niceties, she wrote, "Love, in Christ." I thought, "Hum, is that, 'LOVE, in Christ,' or was that, 'Love, in CHRIST.'" There are two different ways to look at this.

During a high school church retreat I left a seat open next to me, intentionally shooing others away, intentionally waiting for her to come out from the women's dorm for breakfast on that Saturday morning. After she got her breakfast she walked right on by and sat at another table and I thought, "I know now that she does not love me." Later, she explained that since I didn't verbally invite her and ask her to come and sit next to me, she didn't want to appear forward by taking the seat. "Does she love me?" It was a very, very confusing time.

This was a legitimate question for me, as a young man, to ask because there was still good reason for me to wonder. She had not yet declared her love to me, let alone vowed her love to me.

In these opening verses of this prophesy, the prophesy that Malachi writes, the people of God had a similar question to the one that I was asking. That question was this, "Does He love me? Does God really love me?" This question was being asked of God by the Israelites, but rather than being a legitimate question being asked of a God who had not yet declared His love or who had demonstrated His love, theirs was an audacious question. It was an insensible question, and indeed even a shameful question being asked by a people who had hardened their hearts against a God who was reaching out to them constantly in love. They were guilty of doubting God's love and this, Malachi would suggest, is a great spiritual offense and it is a representation of a sad-soul condition. In asking this question God, in love, sent them one of the servants. He sent them Malachi. Malachi would be the last in a long train of prophets and God, in love, sent Malachi to call His people to repentance; repentance from their sin, to enter into a restored relationship so that they would never doubt in defiance, but that they would always embrace in enjoyment. He sent Malachi to seek to open up their hearts to receive His love and to walk in His ways.

Malachi was given the role of every other prophet that God sent before him and that was the role of awakening the people's conscience; reminding them of God's grace and of their own ingratitude that they held even in the face of a God who, in grace, was acting so kindly to them and reaching out His arms to them.

I hope we listen attentively to Malachi's words and that we would listen to his message with fresh ears. I believe that we need this message, a message that was delivered over twenty-four hundred years ago. His message is simple: do not doubt God's love for you, but rather receive it and worship Him for it and enjoy Him in it.

In this study we will look at the message that Malachi gives in the first five verses into two parts. The first part has to do with the shameful problem which is identified as doubting God's love. The second part has to do with the sure proof which is an encouragement for us to discover God's love.

Let's first look at the shameful problem of doubting, or denying, God's love. There is an historical context which is important for us to understand as we study our way through this prophesy that Malachi gives to us. Malachi is speaking specifically to the Nation of Israel.

Remember how God, in Abram, had promised that a nation would come from him, even while Abram had no children and he was up in the years. God said that He would bless Abraham with a people and with a land and with a purpose.<sup>1</sup> Eventually God would give this nation a king in the reply of a request of one, because God Himself had been their King up to that point and He gave them Saul.<sup>2</sup> Then He gave them David who was God's anointed king, the king that God chose for the nation.<sup>3</sup> Then He gave them Solomon.<sup>4</sup> After Solomon that nation divided and split into two parts: a Northern Kingdom and a Southern Kingdom and they went their separate ways. The Northern Kingdom, especially, was steeped in idolatry; it had no good kings. The Southern Kingdom engaged in idolatry, but not to the degree of the Northern Kingdom. Most of its kings were evil, wicked, and idolatrous men, but some of them were good and godly. God, in His judgment upon His people, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, sent armies against this nation. First, there was Assyria and Assyria conquered the Northern Kingdom and it received the judgment first because its sin was deeper and darker. There were some revivals taking place in the Southern Kingdom so God stayed His hand, but the Southern Kingdom continued to rebel against God and God eventually sent another nation which had risen up as an empire over the world and that was the Nation of Babylon. That nation conquered the Southern Kingdom.

Now we find this nation that was God's own people, set apart for God to be God's representatives in this world and to bring Light to the whole world, a nation in exile and a nation in captivity. For decades they remain in captivity, but God, in His grace to His people, arranges for His people to return to their land and He does so under Ezra. They turn back and during the reign of the Persian Empire they were able to rebuild the Temple. Under Nehemiah the people were able to rebuild the city walls of Jerusalem; they are getting their country back.

The exile, or captivity, that the Northern and Southern Kingdom went under, cured them of the sin of idolatry. Never again would the people of Israel, as a people, as a whole, embrace idolatry in worship. They learned their lesson. They understood that God chastened them for the sin of idolatry, but when they came back into the land, while they did not engage in idolatry, none-the-less, they began to engage in a formal, external brand of worship. They came back to the Temple, they came back to the city, but they came back in a disgruntled fashion. They realized that the Temple that they now built did not have the same glory of the Temple that Solomon built and they were disgruntled about that. They continued in externalism and going through the motions of sacrifices, but their hearts still were not united to God in fullness of worship and their lives were still resisting His commandments, so they were still walking after their own ways.

It is to such a people that Malachi writes. Malachi will address three clear evidences in this prophesy of this nation worshipping God only in an external fashion. What three evidences does God bring to this people who are back in the land, reinstituting worship, every week going to worship God, but none-the-less, have hearts that are still cold to God? What evidence will Malachi address? There are three proofs.

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 17

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 11:12-15

<sup>3</sup> 2 Samuel 2:1-7

<sup>4</sup> 1 Kings 1:28-29

The first proof that he will address in this book is that the spiritual leadership of this nation was incredible immoral and greedy. It behaved with unclean hands before God.

The second proof that Malachi is going to address is that the family was broken because of the sin of divorce. This became a proof that Malachi brings to indict this nation that they had walked away from God.

The third proof that Malachi is going to bring is that the people were simply not tithing. They were spending their money for the glorification of themselves, but not for the glory of God.

That is interesting, isn't it? Malachi writes over twenty-four hundred years ago and yet as we read of these specific problems, can't we see how relevant he is to our time today?

We have to ask the question: is the church of Jesus Christ in these United States guilty of having an external form of worship without a heart passion? We can go to these very same proofs and ask, "What is the condition of the spiritual leadership in Christ's church throughout our land? Is it a leadership that is plagued by immorality and greed?" We can ask the question, "What is the condition of the family within the church of Jesus Christ? Is it whole and thriving the way God intended, or is it broken as a result of the sin of divorce?" We can ask the question, "What is the heart of generosity and zeal and passion for the glory of God within the people of the church of Jesus Christ in the United States? Is it such a passion that gives evidence by the checkbook, that we are giving not out of our surplus, but even out of our need so that God's name will be glorified in this world? Or, are we spending it for the glory of ourselves?"

Once again we will find that Malachi is intensely relevant and speaks with great clarity to our day.

We open with Verse 1, and here we find an "oracle". I like the King James Version better when it says,

<sup>1</sup>The burden of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

This word oracle, or burden, is used twenty-seven times in the Old Testament. It is most often used as the introduction of a message of judgment, so when you read as an Old Testament Jew reading the prophets and you read at the beginning of the prophesy this word, an oracle or the burden, you know, immediately, that you are not reading a Hallmark card of warm sentiment and you begin to squirm in your seat when you read the word "oracle" or "burden" because you realize that this guy is going to say some things that we might not like right now and that will confront us and talk to us about what we need to change, so you begin shifting a little but because this is a weighty message. God is letting the reader know to prepare themselves for serious confrontation, and immediately he is going to call them to make a choice as they read this and to read this with a humble heart ready to respond and obey, or to read this with a heart that is hard and that is cold and that is going to turn away, but the prophet says, "I want you to know what is coming!"

One Old Testament scholar describes the task of the prophet this way, "The task of the prophet is not to smooth things over, but to make things right." I think that is very profound, for in this I believe is God's call of teachers and preachers of the Word of God today; not to entertain, not to make everyone feel good about themselves, not to have everyone leave feeling really happy, but to give God's message clearly and with authority. Often that message is one of grace and goodness and thanksgiving, but often it is a message of correction and reproof.

In 2 Timothy 4, Paul is writing to a young preacher and he will tell Timothy these words which are words that we need to hear today,

<sup>2</sup>Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. <sup>3</sup>For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. <sup>4</sup>They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

Friends, I believe that God is talking about our day and as a result I would urge you to pray for pastors and pray for teachers to be faithful to God's call. I believe that it will become a more and more difficult task in our land to continue to preach the Word. There will be greater and greater cost. So, pray and pray for God's grace to keep sending teachers

who will speak His Truth and who will live it out with integrity. Pray that God will not send a famine of His Word upon this land in judgment.

In Verse 2 of Malachi, God says,

<sup>2</sup> "I have loved you," says the LORD.

Now we get to the meat of Malachi's message. As God looks out over this rebellious people He tells them that He is going to give them a message that is going to be difficult. You would expect His first words to be, "Let me dive right in to tell you," but instead His first words are, "I want you to know that I have loved you," and this statement is in what is called "perfect tense". That is to say that He is saying, "I have loved you in the past, I am loving you now, and I will continue to love you." What a way to begin a burden, a message of judgment. This love He has is not because of the people's cuteness or the people's lovability, or because of the people's obedience. That was not the case. This is a love that God sets upon them.

God loves us even in those times when we, in our humanness, in dealing with the same kind of relationship would say, "I have had enough! I am not going to talk about my love for you right now. I am going to talk to you about how you need to change and how you have wronged me." That is not the way God does it, does He? He says, "Before I relate where your lives are bending away from my blessing I want you to know that I love you deeply. I want you to know that nothing is going to change my love for you. Nothing I say here flows from a spirit of rejection. Everything I say flows from a desire to bring blessing." It is as though, when Malachi arrives at the scene, for this Bible conference to the people of Israel, for God's people, God unfurls this banner with the theme of the conference, and the theme of the conference is this: I Loved You. I Have Loved You. I Am Loving You. And, I Will Always Love You.

I recently read a book by an evangelical author. I liked much of the book, but I came to a part that was so disheartening. This evangelical author writes, "I grew up hearing the Old Testament stories and they helped me form my early image of God. As I read them now, however, what stands out is the contrast between their pattern of instant punishment and Jesus' style." He is saying that he read the Old Testament and then he read Jesus and he saw what a contrast there was between the two. He continues, "I can only conclude that God mercifully changed His style of relating to cantankerous human beings. Although we may deserve punishment for rebellion, God has chosen a gentler, freedom-enhancing way. Somehow I missed the change introduced by the Great Physician; the change from judgment to grace." Why that is so disheartening is because this author, I believe, has completely missed the revelation of God who doesn't change. God speaks of Himself as One who loves His people from the beginning of the Book all the way to the end and I thought to myself, as I read this, hasn't this person read the Book of Jonah where God, in love and mercy, reached out to the Ninevites who were in rebellion and offered to them the opportunity to repent and when they did repent He stayed His hand of judgment and He brought them into blessing.

I want you to know that the God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament and He doesn't change, and because this idea is so fashionable yet it is an idea that, I believe, robs God of His rightful glory.

In Deuteronomy 7, God is going to tell the people this in the giving of the Law,

<sup>6</sup> For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. <sup>8</sup> But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery...

God is saying, "I set my affection and my love upon you and it is not because of anything that was lovable about you, but it was because I purposed in my heart to set my love upon you."

We don't have time to look at all of how the Old Testament reveals God's love, but one of my favorite verses is Zephaniah 3:17,

<sup>17</sup> “The LORD your God is with you,  
he is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you,  
he will quiet you with his love,  
he will rejoice over you with singing.”

The word picture that Zephaniah is giving us is that the God of the Old Testament is a God who loves His people so much that He quiets them with His love and He rejoices over them singing. When do we find ourselves in a human situation rejoicing over someone with singing? The time in my life when I remember doing that the most often was after the birth of our babies. You come into the baby’s room and you just start singing over them and you rejoice over them with singing because you have such tender love that you have to give words to it and you have to put it into music. You may make up your own lullabies and you may use someone else’s, but almost every parent rejoices over their little one with singing. This is the picture of God’s tender love for us and it is the picture that God gives Himself in the Old Testament.

Here is Malachi He says, “‘I have loved you,’ says the Lord.” The characteristics of God’s love that are demonstrated and revealed in the Scripture are astounding and amazing because they separate themselves from our own human love for each other. God’s love is described as being a sovereign love; that is to say that He is not required to give it and yet of His own free will and of His own counsel, He places His love upon us. God is a God who does everything as He pleases and He loves us because He chooses to love us. He could reject us and still maintain His righteousness, but He doesn’t reject us. Instead He reaches out in love.

Furthermore, not only is God’s love sovereign so that nothing can separate us from God’s love, but also God’s love is unconditional. That is not true of human love. There is almost always certain conditions that we place, and yet God shows Himself as the ultimate lover by saying, “I love you and my love for you is not motivated by anything you have done. In fact there is nothing that you can do that would cause me to love you more and there is nothing you can do that would cause me to love you less. My love is unconditional for you and as a result it is eternal. It does not change.”

Shakespeare would say, “Love alters not when an alteration finds. It does not bend with the remover to remove.” That is not true of human love, but it is absolutely true of God’s love.

The third characteristic of God’s love is that it is entirely and intimately personal. In Ephesians 5 God says,

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church...

He uses the personal nature of the love between a husband and a wife to describe His ultimate love for us. He uses the description of a father towards his children and of a mother nursing her baby to describe His love.

Friends, I want you to look at Malachi’s words that God gives to him. He says, “I have loved you.” Do you know that? I want you to notice the response of the people. The response of the people should have been, “Oh, thank you. We worship you,” but what is the response of the people? He says they say,

<sup>2</sup> “But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’”

The human illustration would be a parent turning to his teenage son or daughter and saying, “I love you daughter. I love you son,” and then the teen, because he or she is not feeling so great about his parents, rolls his eyes and says, “Yeah, right! How have you ever loved me?” What kind of a response is that? It is a response that is hard. It is a response that is rebellious. It is a response that is defiant, filled with contempt, and full of an ungrateful spirit. This is not the question. When they ask the question, “How have you loved us,” it is not a question coming from a humble heart wishing to learn more. Perhaps, as parents, we might do things that would merit such a contemptible response from our teenagers, but not God.

The people brashly demand that God whimper at their feet and prove that He really does love them. I wonder, have you ever considered that denying God’s love for you is a sin that we are called to confess as sin. Friends, denying God’s love is a huge spiritual problem. Why is doubting so wrong? When we doubt God’s love we impugn His

character and we believe something about God that robs Him of His full glory. When we doubt God's love we set ourselves as God's judge and we say, "God, if you acted the way I think you should act I would not have these doubts, so begin acting the way that I think you should act, doing the thing that I think you should do, and then I will believe you."

When we doubt God's love we push aside His clear declarations and we question His truthfulness. When we doubt God's love we forget all of His blessings that He has given us and our hearts become ungrateful.

Beloved, doubting God's love for us is very dangerous to our soul. It opens us up to listen to Satan's lies and it robs us of our joy. It strips us of the great motivation that we possess to obey God and to serve Him. So, a person who doubts God's love has a hard time joyfully following the path of obedience and joyfully committing themselves to service.

The Apostle Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5 says,

<sup>14</sup>For Christ's love compels us...

and he goes on to talk about what it compels us to do. It compels us to obey and it compels us to serve, but he says that it is the love of Christ and it is a full embracing by faith of Christ's great love that we open up our heart and delight in God's love for us. So, it is vital that we do the same.

We are often tempted to doubt God's love like the people in Malachi's day were tempted to doubt God's love. When might we most be prone to succumb to this temptation and begin to wonder, "God, do you really love me?" I can think of three specific situations. One is when self-pity enters into our heart and we begin to do as the people in Malachi's day – they looked at their situation and they realized that they didn't have the material prosperity that the nation used to have, two hundred years earlier, and they didn't have the same independence and the same freedom. There were many things that were lacking and they began to say, "Oh, woe is us!" they didn't realize that it was because of their disobedience that God was continuing to withhold His hand of blessing from them, so instead of turning inward and saying, "God, where do we need to repent so that we might receive the full measure of your blessing," they turned upon God and said, "God, how have you loved us?" Beware and be careful when self-pity begins to enter into your heart and you begin to think, "Woe is me!"

Furthermore, envy, the green monster, often hides God's love from us and we are tempted to look around at other people whom God grants temporal prosperity to and ask, "God, how have you loved me?"

Finally, the third element that pushes us into a sphere of temptation to wonder about God's love is when we enter into difficult trials. Sometimes these trials are given to us to chasten us because of our sins and sometimes they are just to purify us; it is not as a result of sin, but it is a result of God being the great Gardener pruning us so that we might be more fruitful.

But instead of turning our hearts away from God's love and begin to doubt and even deny it, let us turn our hearts towards God and say, "God, I am going to embrace and affirm your great and awesome love for me and I am going to pursue you love until I find it in fullness." We need to be careful that we do not become "daisy Christians". Daisy Christians take out their spiritual heart and they say, "He loves me. He loves me not. He loves me. He loves me not." That is never true. The wonder of God's love is that it is always present.

The second part to this message that Malachi gives is the sure proof: the discovering God's love. God could have answered, "You want proof! Tough! I am not going to give it to you. I am not going to lower myself. I have already given you all of the proof that you need," but that is not what God does. Instead, God gives four dynamic proofs which I believe are very profound for us.

The first evidence we have of God's great love, and now in tenderness, He turns to this contemptible question and He says, "I am going to answer it gently to help you. First, I want to make it clear, and I am going to declare my love for you." That is what He does in Verse 2,

<sup>2</sup> "I have loved you,"

He gives this very, very clear statement. We are not left to wonder whether or not God loves us. God makes it abundantly clear in His Word that He does so.

The people chose to contradict God's clear declaration, but God wants them to continue to look back at His declaration when He says, "Look, I have loved you with a love that never ends."

The second evidence is God's election of His people as we see in Verses 2 and 3,

<sup>2</sup> "Yet I have loved Jacob, <sup>3</sup> but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

God is reminding His people of His specific, electing love that He placed upon them from Abraham on to the present day; that He has not yet taken His hand away from His electing love of His people and of a special covenant blessing being placed upon them, so He speaks about Esau and Jacob, twins born to Rebecca. Esau was born first so he deserved the birthright, the blessing of his father, but God had chosen and elected Jacob to receive that blessing and Jacob did indeed receive this blessing.

When He talks and uses this language "love" and "hate", He is not speaking in emotional terms, in that in Jacob He had this emotional, fuzzy warmth for and in Esau He had this malicious intent for, but rather he is pointing to God's choice of entering into a specific, intimate relationship. He says, "With Jacob and the people who flowed from Jacob, I have elected to enter into this intimate relationship." That not had been true of Esau. With Esau, He said, "Can't you remember and recognize that it is my electing love upon my people, and upon you as my people, that is the dynamic proof of my undying and everlasting love for you."

As we consider what it means to love and hate, human analogies may help us to understand what God means. When a man asks a woman to marry him, he is saying, "No!" to every other woman on the planet. For most other women, that is okay that he is saying, "No" to them, but there may be a few who say, "I still want to be in a relationship. I want to have an intimate relationship with this person." The man has to say, "No, no, unequivocally, no!" That what God means when He uses this love/hate language; "I love this one. I hate this one. I am saying, 'No' to all of these others. I am saying, 'Yes' to you."

We enter into a mystery here and I understand. We don't know why God would elect us. We don't know why God elected Israel to be the Nation of Blessing. We don't know why God elected individual believers. We know that this is exactly what God continues to write in regards to our own salvation: that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world and that we are His elect according to the kind intention of His will.

Many find this Doctrine of Election very troubling, but in it I find cause for great rejoicing. We do not understand many of the mysteries behind it. It is not as though God is arbitrary in His choice. God, in the counsels of eternity past, took counsel with Himself and He made certain decisions that He had a right to make. Those decisions were not on the basis of anything that we have done, but solely upon the basis of His grace. So, as a recipient of God's great love, all we can say, as understanding of ours being a part of God's elect through faith in Jesus Christ according to the eternal counsel of God's will, we can come before God and say, "Wow, God! I cannot imagine why you would choose me for this place of blessing, but by your Spirit I know that you have on the basis of my faith in Jesus, and all I can say is, 'Thank you.'"

The third evidence that God gives is the evidence of God's specific blessings. He goes and talks specifically about some of the difficulties that Edom, the nation that came from Esau, in Verse 4,

<sup>4</sup> Edom may say, "Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins."  
But this is what the LORD Almighty says: "They may build, but I will demolish."

The Edomites are self-ruling and they believe in the ability to forge their own destiny, but God is telling them that He holds the keys to the future. In doing so, in speaking to Israel about Edom's demise, He is reminding Israel about their lack of demise. He is saying, "Listen Israel, I have spared you time and time again. I have redeemed you from Pharaoh. You have to remember My act of kindness. I have taken you out of an exile that seemed deep and dark and one you were unable to extricate yourself from. I have placed Persia in rule so that they would be kind to you. I set

before you a specific ruler by the name of Cyrus who allowed you to go back to Jerusalem and build your Temple and rebuild the walls. How is it that you cannot see My hand of specific acts of blessing being upon you?"

If the people would have only stopped long enough to consider all that God was providing for them, they would have never asked this question, but instead of giving thanks for the specific, individual blessings that God was giving, they were shaking their fist and saying, "How have you loved us? You need to prove it more."

The last evidence that we have is that God held a great purpose for this people in Verse 5,

<sup>5</sup> "You will see it with your own eyes and say, 'Great is the LORD – even beyond the borders of Israel!'"

God is reminding this people that they had a great purpose in God's great mission upon this world and that purpose was to be a blessing to all of the nations of the world and that God loved them so that they were given this opportunity to be a part of His eternal plan in this world.

Friends, I want you to know that God has given us this very same opportunity to be a part of this purpose of making the name of the Lord known through all of the nations.

God spoke of a contrast here. He spoke of the Nation of Israel and of the Nation of Edom and the difference was the difference of one who had been given God's love and received it by faith and entered into the blessings. The other nation had still been offered God's love, but they refused and they rejected it and they turned away from it. The reason why they were not a part of God's blessing was not because they were the non-elect, but it was because they defied God and refused to humble themselves. Today, God offers this same opportunity for everyone to become part of His elect people.

You may say, "I don't know if I am a part of God's elect," and the Scripture says to you, "Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will enter into this kind of love that God has placed upon His people."

This is a covenant love and God places it upon everyone who believes.