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## The Promise to Malachi Righteousness and Healing in a World of Guilt and Regret

Two lies mankind wants to believe: autonomy and self-sufficiency  
This is all about our innate desire for self-rule  
The promises of His God's grace are only as secure as the extent of His rule.

“Need” is defined as “essential for life”  
When convinced something is a need, then we feel entitled to it  
When convinced something is a need, we think it's our right to demand it  
When convinced something is a need, we judge the love of God by His willingness to deliver it

Assyria and Babylon had broken every Israelite heart; few would recover  
Destruction of livestock and property, resources consumed, and families separated by distance or death  
After more than 70 years some were allowed to return, like refugees of war

How were they to understand the stories of the Lord calling Abraham to be the father of a nation of Israel, God's chosen and blessed people?  
Yes, they had disobeyed God's Law  
Yes, they had idol-worshipping hearts  
But what about God's promises to never leave or forsake them?  
Where was God in all this?

The people questioned God's promises, like these:

**Psalm 9:10** *And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you.*

**Psalm 103:11** *For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him*

They had lost hope, lost faith, lost believing what God said about his love for them. Their circumstances convinced them that God hadn't kept His word.

They demanded God give an account of Himself

**Psalm 22:1** *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?*

The prophet Malachi was likely a contemporary of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BC

What's interesting about those books (the last of the history of OT Israel)

is that they are all lacking any description of God doing anything miraculous; like God just wasn't engaged or interested, because they had grown so cold, so un-interested in God  
God's people had willingly become secular

**Malachi 1:2a** "I have loved you," said the Lord  
How have you loved us?

God reminded them of two brothers centuries before: Jacob and Esau  
**Malachi 1:2b-5** *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," 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.*

**Genesis 25:23** *And the Lord said to her, Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the older shall serve the younger.*

Jacob was chosen before he had any chance of earning or disqualifying himself from God's promise

The problem wasn't simply that they couldn't see God's love in their circumstances - they also couldn't see themselves in an honest light either.

After their return from exile, they had become jaded. They went through the motions of worshipping God, but their hearts were far from Him. They couldn't see the benefits of serving God, and in fact believed it was better not to  
Malachi 3

Their worship was heartless because their hearts were faithless

The priests had not been truly honoring God in their work

They promised to give what was good, but gave what was less so

And they thought to do otherwise was a bother

Keeping Covenant Law with God wasn't worth it

The people had not been truly honoring God in their homes

They broke their marriage vows, divorced their Jewish wives, and

married foreign women which led them to worship foreign gods

The prophets were never popular. They spoke of God's Law, and the extent to which the people had broken it. Prophets took people to the edge of hopelessness and the sense that God's promises to them were unraveling.

Those of us who understand the bigness of God's grace to us also have to understand our incredible need for God's grace of forgiveness

There would be no meeting God in the middle. Hope would flow only in one direction - from the King of heaven and earth to the empty-handed heirs of His promise.

So human beings, all of us naturally do two things:

We try to make God be the god we want Him to be

We try to use other people's failings as justification for God to approve of us

And we all live with feelings of guilt and regret

The real problem with us is this - we're too easily satisfied, we settle for lesser things

But, God is dissatisfied. He wants better for us. He wants real security and contentment and joy for us, only in Him

**1 Thessalonians 5:23-24** *Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*

The person next to you doesn't need the gospel more than you do; he or she just needs it differently than you do. When we make false spiritual comparisons, we think we're better off than we are and it weakens our resolve to seek and celebrate God's redeeming grace.

**Malachi 4:1** *For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.*

This sounds nothing but bad!

God is the final judge. All wickedness will be destroyed. As Christians, we want this as, like the Jews of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC longed for justice.

But if we're honest with ourselves, we should be with the wicked being destroyed. Justice, for us, should result in destruction, not hope.

But here is the hope in the message of Christmas:

**Malachi 4:2-3** *But for you who hear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings. You shall go out leaping like calves from the stall. And you shall tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet, on the day when I act, says the Lord of hosts.*

Hope would break like the dawning of the sun, bringing life to every dark corner

Healing from our sin, and healing of our relationship with God

Freedom from our sin, and freedom from trying to find our salvation in religion

Victory over our God-averse culture, with the Kingdom of God fully manifested

**Malachi 4:4-5** *Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes.*

Remember that following God is all in. Jesus would come like a second Elijah to tell people, warn people that they were given opportunity to have hope, but that hope would work hand-in-hand with the willingness to be led by Jesus, not continuing to try to control their own lives playing by their own rules, and each person trying to determine for themselves what morality would look like.

**Malachi 4:6** *And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction*

Healing from seeking self-glory and security through prosperity, finding healing in the new King

But this new King, this eternal King, wouldn't come with a big media campaign. He would come in the most unexpected way, from a place that was barely a spot on the map, from people who were humble and not important

**Micah 5:2** *But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.*

And His victory as King would not be achieved through military or political power, but through His own death. He died so we could live, and He rose again so we could be with Him forever. He chose us for that.

**1 Thessalonians 5:9-11** *For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.*

In Jesus our King, the incarnation of God, there is hope for our despair

There is healing for our brokenness

There is joy to overcome our sadness

And there is freedom from our bondage

Instead, our future, our eternity is this...

**Rev. 21:3-4** *And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.*

The Christmas story is the story of God's love for us.

“The One who is love sent His Son of love to be a sacrifice of love so you and I could be rescued by His love and rest in that love forever and ever.” Paul David Tripp