

LOVE AND GRACE IN MALACHI

4: MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS. 2: 17 – 3: 1 – 15

1: 2; *I have loved you, says the Lord. But you say, how have you loved us?* Deuteronomy 7: 6 – 9; *holy people ... chosen ... His own possession ... loved ... redeemed ... faithful God ... keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness.* 1 John 4: 7 – 11; ie, because of God's eternal nature. God's love & justice are in love. *God is love; NOT, love is God.*

2: 17; wearied the Lord ... where is the God of justice? Isaiah 1: 13 & 14; *Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon & Sabbath & the calling of assemblies - I cannot endure solemn assembly. Your new moons & your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them.* 43: 22 – 25 - 28 cf. 40: 28 – 31. The Covenant God warns his people that they have wearied him; they have made him tired of his own people. Contrast of blessings & curses; Leviticus 26: 3 – 13 & 14 – 38 plus Deut. 28: 2 – 14 & 28: 15 - 68. They are blinded by self-righteousness; Matthew 23: 16 – 26 & John 9: 39 – 41. They charged God with being guilty of the same perverse evil he had condemned; Isaiah 5: 20 – 23, i.e. evil is good! Others complained; *Where is the God of justice?* Situation ethics, God doesn't mind, we must be modern! Evil was prospering, love & grace are outmoded, so it must be alright & it's only wrong if we are caught.

3: 1; *I am on the point of sending my messenger; unexpectedly & regardless of the lapse of time; cf. 4: 5.* Isaiah 40: 3 & 8: *In the wilderness a voice cries: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord ... The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.* John the Baptist. – *And the Lord, whom you seek. (Play on words for they were not seeking Him) ... will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming says the Lord of hosts.* Messiah, our eternal high priest, our only righteousness one: His OT temple rebuilt & His NT people; 1 Cor. 3: 16 & 17, *Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? ... God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* (God's people as a corporate whole) cf. 6: 19, the individual believer.

V2 – 6; he comes to refine & purify for his judgment is not punitive but redemptive. *He will purify the sons of Levi,* for the priests have led the people astray. Refiner's fire & fullers' soap = like gold or silver with fire burning off dross & purifying precious metal; also with soap removing impurities from wool. In NT church, no priesthood for every believer is royal priest; 1 Peter 2: 5 – 10. Every blemish is gone, remembered no more! 1 Cor. 6: 9 – 11. **V4 & 5;** justice & judgment go hand in hand; *My messenger,* John the Baptist; Matthew 3: 1 – 3 & 7 - 10. **V6;** gives the reason for v1 - 5; *For I the Lord do not change...* **God is** immutable, divine constancy; Psalm 102: 26 & 27 & James 1: 17; *Every good gift & every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.* He is the Lord Jehovah, **I AM THAT I AM;** Exodus 3: 14. Because of his unchanging grace, his unalterable holiness; *the children of Jacob are not consumed.* Like their father, they are guilty of deceit & treachery to God & man; & yet they were descendants of a man whom God had chosen by grace to be ancestor of the Redeemer/Messiah. By sufferings, heartaches & hardships the Lord taught Jacob to realise

his own wickedness & unworthiness. Only when he was alone with God; at the end of his **resources of cunning**, did he learn to trust wholly on God's unmerited grace & mercy.

V7 – 12; more Q & A; God confronts his self-righteous people with the truth they were robbing God in tithes & offerings, which both the law & tradition required. Israel's history was continued rebellion against God's statutes/laws; Genesis 14:20, Abram & Melchizedek; Jacob, Genesis 28: 22. The tenth was holy to the Lord; Lev. 27: 30, *Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord.* Tithes were not voluntary but mandatory Deut. 14: 22 & 23, *before the Lord your God.* They deserved his wrath but were pointed to grace; *Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. How shall we return? **V8**; Will man rob God? **V9**; You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you. Haggai 1: 1 – 6; a bag with holes in it. Taxation fraud, undercover deals, bribery in business & government but here is an entire nation accused of robbing their creator. The charge is denied; *How have we robbed you? **V10 – 12**; The storehouse = a room in the temple designated for gifts. The devourer = locusts, Joel 1: 4. God answers that he is willing to be proved as the God of love & grace. He will pour down blessings that cannot be measured; Genesis 41: 49, *Joseph stored up grain in great abundance like the sand of the sea, until he stopped measuring it, for it was beyond measure; Matthew 6: 19 – 24. How can we measure God's abundant love & abounding grace? Only in the Cross! Romans 5: 20; ... where sin increased, grace increased all the more.***

V13 – 15; Q & A again, despite the promised blessings that only God can grant. The evidence of God's love to Jacob (1:2) is ignored by self-righteous & stubborn people. The Lord charges them with hard, harsh, offensive language against him. They reject such charges; God is mistaken! His pleadings, promises & threats fall on deaf ears; **v14**; *It is vain to serve God; ie. useless; what is the point for God is unjust. What is the profit of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of Hosts? **V15***; however absent from everyday life & society God might appear to be!! **NOTE**: *Evil doers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape. **BUT***; he is present and involved in all our affairs of personal, social, family, & governmental life. -- *Next study: v16 – 18 warning and; my treasured possession.*

Scottish Presbyterian; **Iain Murray**. There was in Kilmarnock, Scotland, a medical doctor named Robert Kalley. His upbringing had been one of nominal Christianity, before his studies at the University of Glasgow led him first to question the reliability of the Bible and then to become an open unbeliever. Once settled in his medical practice he gave his leisure hours to socialising, and soon gained the nickname, 'The dancing doctor of Kilmarnock'. Among his patients were Christians, one of them was a woman dying of cancer. Others of his patients were also Christians, and he pitied them for their lack of education. But on his visits to this woman he saw something which he could not explain; he would find her possessed of a peace stronger than her painful condition. She did not miss seeing his surprise and pointing to what lay beside her bed, told him, 'Read the Book! It's all in the Book!' That witness led Kalley to become a new man and, in due course, a pioneer missionary in Madeira and Brazil. (*Evangelical Holiness*, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2013, 2 & 3)