

10/12/25 Six Things About God that Don't Change – God's Love
Pastor Doug Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church *Malachi 1:1-5*

One constant in life is change. Diapers need to be changed. Styles change. People used to dress up to go to sporting events, or when they were going on an airplane, or to church. Now most people don't. What was once cool and pursued by millions quickly becomes cringe – look at your high school or college yearbook, or some old photos. Consider how much The Beatles changed in just eight years — from 1961 to 1969. Opinions, attitudes, values, behaviors, language, knowledge, technology, prices, weather, families, and even our bodies, are all constantly changing. People say and do things today that, in a previous time, would have been considered unacceptable or disgraceful — and, in previous generations, people said and did things that *we consider* unacceptable or disgraceful. There are a few things that reliably change that we can count on, like the ocean's tides. The moon is always changing, but it follows an unchanging cycle. Things that don't change provide a sense of dependability, stability, and reliability when so much else feels unstable or uncertain. The good news is God doesn't change and we can place our hope in, and build our lives on, God's unchanging character.

Today, we're beginning a new series, *Six Things About God that Don't Change*, based on the book of the prophet Malachi. The theme verse is ***Malachi 3:6, "For I the Lord do not change."*** In Malachi, we discover six things about God that don't change: **God's love, glory, faithfulness, justice, mercy, and purpose.** Each week, we'll look not just at who God is — but how we can *respond*. We'll explore these timeless aspects of God that we can rely on, even as so much in the world seems unstable and changing.

Let's begin with some background. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi is the final book in the collection of the Twelve Prophets, also called the Minor Prophets because they're brief. **There are only 55 verses in Malachi and 47 are presented as spoken by God, the highest proportion of all the prophets.** The name Malachi means "my messenger". We don't know anything about the person who composed this book, and there are no references in it to help us place these words in a specific historical context. The consensus is that the book is from the time of the Persian

Empire, after the Babylonian exile and the reestablishment of the Temple in 515 BC, somewhere between 500-430 years before Christ. **The central theme of Malachi is faithfulness to the Lord's covenant and teaching.** There are words of judgment and salvation directed to the people of Israel or to the priests (*Malachi 1:6; 2:1*). We also hear the voices of the people and priests in response. One of the distinctive features of Malachi is **the question-and-answer format.** The priests and people state their questions in a way that sets up an ongoing dialogue. **There are 22 questions in this brief book,** some rhetorical and some accusatory. The book opens with a statement of love by the Lord, followed by a question of the people.

Listen to *Malachi 1:1-5*, “An oracle. **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? **says the Lord.** Yet **I have loved** Jacob but I have hated Esau; I have made his hill country a desolation and his heritage a desert for jackals. 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, until they are called the wicked country, 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 borders of Israel!*’”

Malachi begins by reminding Israel of something we all need to hear often — **God loves us first.** When that truth settles deeply in our hearts, our response is worship, gratitude, and a desire to love God in return. Malachi affirms God’s steadfast love for God’s people, even as they question it. “**I have loved you,**” says the Lord. God’s love is enduring and not based on our actions. God starts with love rather than correction, which soon follows. The Lord leads with love — even toward people who are questioning God’s love for them. Think about that for a second. When you have a hard conversation with your spouse, your kids, or a friend, do you start with love or correction? Imagine how different our relationships could be if, like God, we began with love before we addressed what’s wrong. **Start with love.** It sets the tone for everything that follows.

The people respond to God’s profession of love by saying suspiciously, even cynically, “*Really? Are you sure? How have you loved us?*” Sound familiar? We still do that, don’t we? When life gets hard — when things fall apart — we wonder, “*God, if You love me, why is this happening?*” We often struggle to see God’s love when life doesn’t

go as we hope or expect. Israel had been through exile, invasion, and foreign rule. Life was tough. They were tired and disillusioned.

God responds by reminding the people that the Lord had chosen to establish a covenant with Jacob and his descendants, and had ensured that Jacob's line would be preserved and would survive no matter what opposition they might face — including the descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau. Some people struggle with what the Lord says about Edom. In *Malachi 1:4*, God's punishment of Edom doesn't seem fair when viewed in isolation. However, the verse is not an isolated incident, but the climax of a long history of Edom's treachery, pride, and hatred toward Israel. The passage is meant to assure Israel of God's love for them.

One of the most beautiful scenes in the Bible is the reconciliation of Jacob and Esau, the ancestors of those two peoples. It's described in *Genesis 33*, where, after twenty years of separation, Esau runs to embrace Jacob. Despite Jacob's fear and attempts to appease Esau with gifts, Esau's spontaneous and emotional reaction of running to meet him, embracing him, and weeping together is a moving picture of reconciliation and God's grace. Unfortunately, as time went on, their descendants failed to build on that moment, and instead of deepening their bond and support as allies, they became bitter adversaries.

Throughout history, Edom actively resisted and fought against Israel. During the Exodus, Edom refused the Israelites peaceful passage through their territory, forcing them to take a longer and more difficult route (*Numbers 20:14-21*). Later, during the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BC, Edom sided with the Babylonians. They looted Jerusalem, and actively hunted down and captured escaping Jewish refugees, showing a particularly cruel indifference to their brothers' suffering (*Obadiah 1:10-14*). Choices have consequences. At some point, injustice must be punished, people need to be protected from those who would do them harm. That's what happened between the nations of Israel and Edom. God's judgment on Edom in Malachi wasn't for a single offense, but for their perpetual and generational hatred of God's people.

These verses from *Malachi 1:2-4* can be confusing or difficult for some people because a key Christian belief is that God is love — yet, in Malachi, God appears to love Jacob and hate Esau. We may understand that love and hate relate to God's sovereign

choice and doesn't imply personal animosity, but rather a rejection of Esau's line in favor of Jacob's, through whom the covenant promises would continue. Yet, some people wonder if this implies that God's love is limited.

It's important to remember that the Old Testament shows hope and God's love for all people through many prophecies, most notably in **Isaiah**, which repeatedly describes God's salvation reaching the Gentiles (non-Jews). Key verses include **Isaiah 49:6**, where God's servant is made a "*light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth*", and **Isaiah 11:10**, which foretells that "*in him shall the Gentiles hope*". The covenant with Abraham, in **Genesis 12:3**, promises that "*in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*", which laid the foundation for God's blessing to be extended to people of all nations. Israel's role was to be a "kingdom of priests" and a "holy nation" to show God's glory to the world, not to be blessed in isolation. The hope God promised was never to be limited **to** Israel, but was always intended to extend **through** Israel to the rest of the world. Israel wasn't chosen *instead of* others — they were chosen *for* others. To be a light to the nations. That's God's heart — a love that starts small but spreads wide.

The breadth of God's love doesn't change from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The core message of the Bible is about God's love, but its expression and revelation are different in each testament. The Old Testament demonstrates God's love through covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai, and David, which emphasize God's justice and holiness. God's love was demonstrated through his promises and covenants. God showed mercy and patience, as seen in the sparing of Noah and his family from the flood, or offering salvation through Jonah to the city of Nineveh, the capital city of Israel's enemy. God is presented as loving and just, full of mercy, but also with righteous judgment against sin.

The New Testament focuses on the ultimate act of God's love through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus' death on the cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love, offering forgiveness for sin and salvation to everyone who believes. This love, encompassing all who believe, regardless of their background, is stated in *John 3:16*, "For God so loved the world..."

The Apostle Paul wrote extensively in *Romans 9-11* about the idea expressed in *Malachi 1:1-5* concerning the relationship of Jacob and Esau, Israel and Edom, and

God's redemptive plan. God's choices in history reflect God's redemptive plan, not favoritism. *Romans 9* describes God's sovereign freedom to direct salvation history. Saying, "Jacob I loved, Esau I hated" reflects God's covenant choice, not personal rejection. It shows that salvation is by God's love, not human effort. No one earns God's favor; we're all dependent on God's love.

In *Romans 10*, Paul describes how **salvation is for all who believe**. He writes, "**Everyone** who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." God's covenant is about trust, not who your ancestors were. It was Israel's unbelief that opened the door for Gentiles. God's saving love is offered to all nations in and through Christ. Then, in **Romans 11:26, 32**, Paul describes the mystery of God's love and mercy, declaring, "*All Israel will be saved... For God has bound everyone over to disobedience so that He may have mercy on them all.*" Paul uses the image of an olive tree: the Gentiles are being grafted in, and Israel's hardening is partial and temporary. God's final goal is restoration, love, and mercy for all — Jews and Gentiles alike. God's sovereign plan, though mysterious, ends in universal opportunity to respond to and receive God's love and mercy.

God's purposes always aim toward love and redemption. We learn from the beginning of *Malachi* that we're to reject pride. Whether one is a Jew or Gentile, no one earns God's grace, but we're invited to embrace God's love. Remember, God's "love vs. hate" language is not about animosity; it's about God's covenant and plan that points us to the cross where justice and love meet. In *Malachi 1:5*, God promises that the Lord's greatness will be seen "*beyond the borders of Israel*". That's what we see in Jesus. Since God so loved the world, so should we. We're to live inclusively, since God's love is for all, we're called to extend that same love to all.

Those of you reading or listening to the Bible through the year with us may recall recently seeing Michael Timmis' definition of love. "The way I define love is by using the fruit of the Spirit, which starts with love. I believe that joy is love rejoicing, peace is love at rest, patience is love waiting, kindness is love interacting, goodness is love initiating, faithfulness is love keeping its word, gentleness is love empathizing, and self-control is love resisting temptation." This is the love we're called to live and share.

A naval officer was steering his ship through a storm one night, when he saw a faint light ahead. Fearing a collision, he signaled, "*Change your course 10 degrees*

north.” A message flashed back: *“Change your course 10 degrees south.”* Angry, the officer signaled again: *“I’m the Officer of the Deck in the U.S. Navy! Change your course 10 degrees north!”* The reply came: *“I am a seaman, second class. Change your course 10 degrees south.”* Furious, the officer barked, *“This is a battleship! Change your course immediately!”* The light blinked back: *“This is a lighthouse.”* The battleship changed course.

Everything else may move, shift, and change — but the lighthouse doesn’t. God’s love is like that lighthouse — steady, immovable, and shining even in the fiercest storm. God’s love is the fixed point that keeps us from running aground. Malachi reveals a God who loves, chooses, and judges. Romans reveals that the same God chooses to show love to all. The story that began with Jacob and Esau finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ — where divine justice and divine love come together perfectly.

When everything around us is shifting — our culture, our families, our bodies, even our moods — God’s love is the lighthouse that never changes. It’s steady. It’s reliable. It’s eternal. That’s something you can build your life on. The tides rise and fall, the storms come and go, but God’s love remains fixed, guiding us safely home. May you hold fast to that unchanging light this week — resting in it, trusting in it, and reflecting it to those caught in the storms of life.

Blessing: **“May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ”** (*2 Thessalonians 3:5*). And may you rest in God’s unchanging love this week and reflect that same love to everyone around you. Amen.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. In *Malachi 1:2*, God says, “I have loved you.” What does this statement reveal about God’s heart for people, even when they doubt or turn away?
2. The people ask, “How have You loved us?” Why do you think we sometimes fail to recognize God’s love in our own lives? What are some ways we can remind ourselves of God’s love when we don’t feel it?
3. God contrasts the divine response to Jacob and Esau, and their descendants. How does this remind us that God’s love is based on God’s promise, not on our performance?
4. When life feels unfair or distant from God’s blessings, how can we hold on to the truth that God’s love never changes? Can you think of a personal example when you saw God’s steadfast love during a hard season?
5. God wanted Israel to recognize His love and respond with love and faithfulness. What does it look like to truly love God in return today — in our worship, priorities, and relationships? Where might God be inviting you to renew your love for the Lord?
6. In verse five, God promises that the Lord’s greatness will be seen “beyond the borders of Israel”. How does sharing God’s love with others reflect our love for the Lord? What are some practical ways we can live out our love for God this week?