

## God's Unchanging Love

*He loves me...he loves me not...he loves me...he loves me not...he loves.....*

We've probably all heard the story of the little girl who, smitten by the little boy of her dreams but doubting his true affections, picks a daisy and proceeds to dismantle it one petal at a time. With each pick she bets on the veracity of his love toward her, hoping against hope that there will be just the right number of petals to produce an affirmative answer. Cute story? Sure. Poignant even? Perhaps. True to life? The thinking person's socially acceptable answer would be to write it off as nothing much more than a far-fetched, fantastical nursery rhyme...right?

Well, not so fast. Take how we understand God's love for us, for example. Have you ever gone through a stretch of time when you doubted God's love for you, or at least questioned whether it was as strong for you as at other times. It may well be that you're experiencing a time in your life right now where you know that you know that you know God loves you. All the better if you have been living there for a while. However, for every person on that side of the ledger, there are at least as many on the other side of the ledger who are plagued by doubt, disappointment, discouragement, or even despair when it comes to their understanding of and belief in God's love for them. And here's the thing: *questioning* the love of God leads to *questionable* (or worse) actions. Is it wrong to call out in question to God? Absolutely not! The psalms are packed full of cries like "How long?" or "Will You forget me forever?" or "Why do you stand afar off?". Nevertheless, the refrain that inevitably follows those cries is called an affirmation of trust. In hope and holy defiance, it shatters doubt with words like these: "But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; my heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the LORD, because He has dealt bountifully with me" (Psalm 13:5-6). When our affirmation of trust begins to wane, though, holy defiance in the face of difficult circumstances (unfulfilled expectations, negative outcomes, heartache and pain) can give way to unholy patterns of living. The Bible has a name for it...sin.

Malachi wrote about these very things. Sure they were written to a particular people with specific circumstances almost 2,500 years ago, but in the coming weeks we just might discover that his message is as true today as it was then and that the issues he dealt with in those times aren't that much different from the issues we face today. Far from being as undependable as a game of chance, Malachi reminds us that God is great and His love is unchanging. May our response to this truth be the same as that which he called for in that day: Reverential love for our awesome, holy, faithful God and repentance from any action that defiles our relationship with Him. And may the ultimate outcome of our response be that which was reported by our heroic prophet: "My name will be great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 2:11).

### *For Further Consideration*

- How well do we understand the reality of God's unchanging love? (Mal 1:1-5)
- Not only according to what we say (which is the easy part) but also according to what we think and do:
  - Do our lives fully reflect that understanding of God's unchanging love for us?
  - How much of the world's influence shows up in how we live?
  - Are we living in the hope of God's bigger picture for all eternity or in the false reality that the here-and-now is paramount?

**God's Unchanging Love**  
**(Introduction to the Book of Malachi and Malachi 1:1-5)**

1. Background

Historical/Cultural (including role of prophets)

Modern-Day Parallels

2. Overview of the Book of Malachi

Structural

Thematic – Specific

Thematic – Overall

3. God's Perfect and Complete Love (Mal 1:1-5)

Passage Notes

Election

Our Response(s)

4. Applications