

# God's Immutability

*Knowing God*

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We live in a world that is in constant change. Perhaps this is seen more by older folk in that we can remember a time when change was at a little more gentle pace. I suppose you get a bit older it seems to drive you back to your childhood, but I well remember as a child going into the sweet shop by the school which I suppose you wouldn't encourage children to do these days. If I got off the bus a stop sooner going home and walked the last bit then I would have a penny or two in my pocket and you could go in that shop and you could buy four or five sweets for a penny. They never went up. Nothing ever changed for those few years when you was at school. But I guess our childhood memories are a little sugar coated. Nevertheless, today we see change all around us. And, in a way, it is inescapable. It would be very difficult to escape the change that goes on in the world.

However today change seems to be increasing in its pace. And I don't think that is just age but it is a part of end times, that things should change at an ever increasing pace. We know that some changes they are good. We have today increased availability to medical facilities and we are able to send the gospel out around the world. We can travel further and quicker. But we know that in the main much change is not good. We see the decay in morality which is very drastic and severe. We see the tide of opinion that moves across the world against the people of God. We see the declension in the professing Church. And we see the number of people are now involved in war, in famine or refugee status. There is so much happening around the world. There is a severe shaking of all that is going on.

And change brings uncertainty, doesn't it? There is something about us that relates to stability. I believe Adam was created in a stable environment and that is how we come into the world in that sense. We have something about us that likes stability. And constant change, even the medical profession tell us, can encourage stress and fear. And we see much evidence of that.

Well, I want this morning, by the help of the Lord, to set before you the One who changes not. And what a contrast to the world that we see around us. Through all the changes that have happened since the world was created. God has been the same. Indeed, he has been the same from eternity and will be the same to all eternity.

You know, when something changes it either changes for the better or for the worse. If it didn't, it wouldn't be change, would it? So change has got to be one way or the other. God is the only one who does not change. He cannot change for the worse. He would not be God. And he cannot change for the better, for he is perfect. There can be no change with God.

Now that is the immense truth and yet I have to acknowledge it is a simple truth and one, no doubt, that you have heard before and you may say, "Well, we know this, just move on." I have no doubt preached on this theme in different ways at different times in different places, but just sitting down and meditating on this in the past week, I have seen fresh things and the impact and the enormous truth that this is, that God changes not, should be such that it has an impact on our lives.

We have been looking on Sunday morning at knowing God. We have looked at some things about God, his existence, that he is the creator, that he is the triune God and that he is the God of power. Last week we were thinking about how that God is everywhere present, his omnipresence. So this week we look at the fact that God changes not. We call that his immutability, that God changes not.

And the first thing I want you to take notice of is-

### **1 That God himself does not change.**

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit do not change, has never changed and never will change. We read Malachi chapter three and verse six says:

"For I am the LORD, I change not."<sup>1</sup>

That is a great statement that God was making by the hand of Malachi there. We will see a little more in a moment. But that is really, if you want to just take something away, take those words away.

"For I am the LORD, I change not."<sup>2</sup>

And what encouragement I found this to be. When we think of all the changes that there are in the world today and some of them we look to the future and we can fear some changes that may not even come. Lots of changes that come are not what we anticipated, but, my friends, we can be comforted and secure in the fact that whatever happens, he is the Lord and he changes not and he is our God.

Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ we read in Hebrews 13:8.

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<sup>1</sup> Malachi 3:6.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”<sup>3</sup>

And God the Holy Spirit being the third person of the trinity is the same and will not change.

Mr. Tozer writes, “To say that God is immutable, that he changes not is to say that he never differs from himself. He is not a growing God. He is not a developing God. He is God who changes not.”

God had Malachi write what he did because the people of God at this particular time in history had become very slack. They had changed. Their forefathers had returned from the Babylonian captivity, about 100 years earlier and they had grown cold. They had grown apathetic to God. They had lost the enthusiasm that their forefathers had when they returned from Babylon and started to rebuild the walls and then the temple. Their faith had become mechanical. We would say today that they ‘still turned up, but that’s about all’. They were like a door on a hinge. Their faith was cold. Or, maybe in the words of John in Revelation where the Lord says they were lukewarm, because that was worse than anything. He said he wanted to spew them out of his mouth. And God saw his people here as being lukewarm. In fact, some of their sin was as bad, if not worse, than when they went into captivity.

In the words of this book, he points out their failings and calls them to return unto God. He points them also to a time in the future when the Lord will come in judgment and in great glory. The people had changed in the wrong way and Malachi points out here that the God with whom they have to do is the same God that their forefathers knew and will be the same God that comes in the clouds of bright glory. And they need to be reminded that God is the same and it is only because he is the same that they were not being consumed.

We have to be careful, don’t we, that we don’t get within the gravitational pull of the world, that we don’t become like these people were at this particular time, that we don’t lose our holy enthusiasm for God himself, not just the things of God, that follows on, but for God himself, or that our labors therefore don’t grow cold and our worship begins to not mean what it once did. For our God is the same and the nearness of that time when we shall see him in all his glory draws closer and closer. To stop and reflect on the immutability of God is a unique concept for us, because we live in a world of so much change. Change that is a result of the fall.

In the Garden of Eden there was no need of anything to change. But since the fall everything begins to change. We think of the earth around us. It is in a state of change, isn’t it? It knew a great change at the flood. That was the biggest change, but even now there are earthquakes, tsunamis etc . You saw the news in respect of the tornado that was sweeping through America. Those are things that were not evident before the fall.

But then people change, don’t they? They change in their relationships. Some people who were once friends are no longer so. But the Lord’s love is constant. People change in

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<sup>3</sup> Hebrews 13:8.

their looks, don't they? That is a part of the fall, isn't it? We get older and older. We change. We die. Our place is taken by another. But he changes not. I was looking at a photograph the other day. Again, it must have been on the computer, a was a street scene, probably taken in the late 1800s. And you could see the intensity on the people's faces in the street. They were going about their business. There were people with aprons on that were obviously selling things. There were people carrying things. There were people going places. And you look at that picture and you think, they have all gone. Every one of them is gone. The street is still there and if you go today to look at that street, see, you will see people with the same intensity on their faces, going about their business doing stuff. But those in the photograph are all gone and their place is now no more. Change. Only God changes not.

Well, the wise man tells us that for humanity there is a time to weep, a time to laugh, a time to build and a time to pull down. In other words, he describes there the life of mankind constantly changing. We are going to build this today. We are going to pull this down today. We laugh today. We mourn today. It is constant change, isn't it? Before we drop off the conveyor belt for another to follow. God is Spirit who knows no age, who knows no change in any part at all. Through all the changing of scenes of life God has remained the same.

God who created Adam and brought all the creatures for him to name is the same God who gave Moses his holy law. It is the same one who came to die for sinners. It is the same one who hears our prayers. It is the same one that we shall see in the clouds of bright glory. God's character, his very essence, his attributes, they will never change. He is always angry with sin. He is always perfectly holy. His love never waxes or wanes. His mercy is constant. He will always be everywhere present. He will always know all things. He will always be the eternal God. And if God was to differ in the slightest degree, he would not be the self existent, self sufficient, eternal God. And, therefore, he would not be God. Everything about God is constant. I am the Lord. I change not.

## **2 The things that God does are forever.**

We say nothing lasts forever, and it is true in respect of the things of time. Look at our motor cars - we might try to look after them, but they soon decay. There are very few things are more than a few hundred years old.

What does it say in Ecclesiastes three?

“I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.”<sup>4</sup>

So what are the works of God, then, that stand forever? He changes not. His works change not. We won't go into great detail of these things. The emphasis here is not so much on the works of God, but how they are forever. I want to highlight how the fact that the works of God last forever and should encourage us in this world of change.

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<sup>4</sup> Ecclesiastes 3:14.

Creation, we have mentioned that a little already. You say, “Well, yes, but that has changed. That has been spoiled by sin.” True, but that was not a change that God brought about. And God’s plans are that creation should be restored again. It is his purpose to do so and nothing can prevent his purposes. He said that I will do that and he will do it. When we look at creation ‘we can put nothing to it.’ It is a work of God. What happens when we do put things to it? We mess it up, don’t we? Well, we try to change God’s design, but God’s design is perfect. When humanity tries to add something to God’s design then we end up with something inferior.

Nothing to be taken from it. So we find even taking a very simple illustration if we remove an animal from an environment we find the food chain breaks down. We find certain animals become extinct, et cetera. God saw that creation was very good; it was perfect. And we cannot add to it or take it away. It is one of the works of God.

In an age of constant environmental change and disturbance we need to be encouraged that although the earth is under the curse, and God is going to judge the world, He has promised there will be a restoration. Whilst we are not to spoil the earth, we ought not to fear of global warming, because God has promised to keep our seasons. And he has promised one day to renew the earth. And in any event, if you look at what men say about global warming—which they are never to sure of anyway—you have only got to read some of the verses in Revelation and see what God thinks of global warming. He is going to warm it up a lot more than what mankind think a few gasses will. But he will also sort it out. And, you know, although he is going to do that, we read in Romans eight that at the moment creation groans and travails in pain. So that is the phraseology God gives us of our current situation on the earth. But it is a work that he has done and it will be there.

God’s Word is another thing that will not change.

“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

Here is something of God that will not change. It is his Word. Not only will he not amend it, because he has no need to. His own unchanging nature is poured out upon these pages, but he also condemns those who will change it. And so he says in Revelation 22:18:

“If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city.”<sup>6</sup>

So there God has a righteous anger if anyone should change what he has set down forever.

I suppose we live in an age where truth has become relative. And that is part of the change. People say well that is your truth and this is my truth and there are lots of other

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<sup>5</sup> Psalm 119:89.

<sup>6</sup> Revelation 22:18-19.

truths over there. Well, we need to be reminded again, don't we, that there is only one truth. Jesus Christ said, "I am the truth." And there is no variation from that. You can't have another truth. Anything that varies from truth is not truth.

We think of his saving work. That doesn't change, does it? That would be terrible, wouldn't it? If your saving work of Christ changed you wouldn't know what the gospel was. What is the gospel this week? What do we preach today? No, that he should save a people from judgment and hell was his great purpose and decree from before the foundation of the world that he would do it. And God's judgments and God's decrees are sure. What a comfort to know that we are saved forever because our God changes not. What a comfort to know that no one can take this away from us and what Christ has done for our souls is done forever. The Lord himself said none shall be lost and none can pluck them from his hand. The whole work of salvation is perfect. Nothing can be added, nothing can be taken away from it.

Oh, some want to add to it. Some add ritual and works to salvation. But once you add anything to it, it is something very different. It is not the eternal work that God has set down. Some take away free grace, repentance, holiness. Some take away the blood of Christ. Some take it all away. If you doubt this, then you just listen to what comes over on the radio from our typical from the large national churches. Listen to much, although not all that comes from many of the large progressive churches both here and overseas. Everything now is lifestyle and perhaps journey rather than what God requires, God's holiness and the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We who by nature who are creatures of change have by God's grace been brought into a state of eternity. I know we have yet to receive those things. But the Lord counts as if we have because we are in Christ who changes not.

But what about his coming again? It is not just looking for the signs of his coming. It is the certainty of his coming. It is something that God has promised. It is something about God, isn't it? It is something again, about his decrees and purposes. It is because it is part of the gospel. If our God is not intending to return again, then the gospel is incomplete. But our Lord will return. He has paid the price on the cross of Calvary for the redemption of our bodies as well as our souls. It has been sealed in his glorious resurrection. It is promised. It must happen and nothing can stop the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nothing could stop his incarnation. Nothing could stop his death and resurrection and certainly nothing can stop him coming again. And nothing can stop God's purposes in relation to his coming. He promised that Israel would return to their land and how impossible that looked for hundreds and hundreds of years. But God brought it to pass and now they need to rebuild their temple and how impossible that looks, particularly on the temple mount.

Now we do look at many other works of God, but I want to move on.

### **3 See some of the consequences of God's immutability.**

He says in that verse.

“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”<sup>7</sup>

Because of our sin God has every right to wipe us out as he says here in this passage. He saw what God’s people were doing. They were not following him. They had gone in the wrong direction. Yes, again, they had only just returned from captivity and yet they had so quickly gone back to where they were. They never learned the lesson. And the Lord could say the same today. When we look around the world and we see all that is going on. He could consume us in a moment. And yet he couldn’t, because he has set his love upon us. And he has promised by covenant to save us. And because he is an unchanging God that cannot lie, he will save us and he will keep us, because our salvation rests on his unchanging love.

We read in Jeremiah 31:

“I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.”<sup>8</sup>

Did you get that word everlasting? We don’t see that on the earth, do we, in the sense of each other. There is not an everlasting love. If we see a couple come together they promise to love when they come to the service to love one another, but they can’t really promise an everlasting love in the sense it is till death us do part. But, you see, Christ is risen and he ever lives to make intercession for us. It is not a case until death do us part. There is no parting there. It is an everlasting love. But as we sit here this morning we sit under his everlasting love. Therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee. And though we were sinners and though we had no thought for God, he drew us by the cords of his love.

As God’s people we can’t be unchanging like God, because the unchangeability of God is who God is. But we are to be a steadfast people. We are called to be constant. Paul wrote to the Church at Corinth that we are to be:

“...stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”<sup>9</sup>

The fact that our God changes not is something that is to have an impact upon the Christian. We are partakers of the divine nature. In another verse we are told not be tossed about by every wind of doctrine. In other words, we hear someone says something, we think, well, that makes a little bit of sense. Well, hang on a minute. We don’t accept things because they make a little bit of sense. We accept things that are in the Scripture. And so if something is a little different to what we are normally used to, we must always

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<sup>7</sup> Malachi 3:6.

<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah 31:3.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:58.

test it by the Scripture. We are not to just follow, well, that is a good idea, now and, oh, this is a good idea now. But we are to remain steadfast upon his unchanging word. And because God is unchanging, his promises stand, his decrees stand. And when we see him in all his glory we shall see the same one that Adam saw in the cool of the day.

What can we do with these things? Well, we have seen that God himself does not change. We have seen that the things God does do not change. And we have just had a little look at some of the consequences of God's immutability, but we ought not to be a changeable people.

Let's remember that we live before the unchanging God. This is what Malachi was doing in his writings. He was reminding the people they lived before an unchanging God. They had got lax in their thinking and, therefore, they were lax in their service. They were lax, particularly in their giving. And being reminded of the immutability of God, should sharpen us of all the things that Malachi was trying to sharpen these people up.

Let's remember that all we do, all we say and all we think is before one who changes not. The God who created all things who spake the Word and they appeared, that is our God. And he is the same today as he was then. This is our God, the one who parted the Red Sea, the one who loved us so much as to send his only begotten Son to die for sinners is our God who changes not. The God who revived his people in a number of times, in a number of places down through history is still the same. He is our God. The one who promised to meet our every need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, that is our God, the God who will keep every one of his promises, that is our God. My friends, what a comfort and strength.

The hymn writer says, "This is the God we adore, our faithful, unchangeable friend."

And then also to remember that the unchanging works of God are the same for all people at all times. Last week we were thinking about the fact that God is everywhere present. We said that doesn't relate just to us now in this moment of time, but throughout the ages. God is eternal. And we are to say he is similar here, that our God is the same in his mighty works to God's people through all time and in all places and we think today there are some—we have been pointed by the news to North Korea—and there are people there, particularly Christians who are very alone, who are very destitute, perhaps hungry, perhaps cold. The Lord is the same to that individual Christian maybe in a cell in China or wherever they may be. He is the same to them as he is to the vast congregations that might be meeting elsewhere in the free world.

And the day will come when all his people will be gathered home from every land, from every tribe, from every nation and we shall know these things more perfectly and we shall realize that we are coming before a holy God and we shall see the Savior face to face, the same face that those saw throughout Scripture. And we will love him with an unsinning heart. Until then we may call upon the name of the unchanging Lord and give ourselves to him.



What an encouragement to prayer, that all the resources of God are there as we come before him. The desire that we might have in our heart, as faint and weak as it is, that he might revive us, that he might bless, that he might save, that he might gather in, that he might do so much. He is able to do it. As we gather the children together, you look at those children and you think, “What potential there is there in the young men to be preachers - what could be done among that group if they were all to come to know the Lord Jesus Christ?”

It is in his hands. It is the same power. And, my friends, are we ready to stand before this unchanging God? The God that has said, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die.” The God who tells us that the wages of sin is death and after death, the judgment. Those statements are true. They come from an unchanging God. When we see him, the Lord won’t say, “Oh, well, that verse, that is really there just to nudge you in really. I didn't really mean it.” No, he is the same today as he was yesterday and will be tomorrow. Those promises are sure. But so also is the promise that whosoever should call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

We will all stand before the unchanging God. How will we stand?

May the Lord so help us by His grace.

“For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”<sup>10</sup>

Amen.

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<sup>10</sup> Malachi 3:6.