



“God Does Not Change”

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The book of **Malachi** is the last book in the Old Testament and its prophecy came about one hundred years after God’s people returned to Jerusalem from Babylonian captivity. That was a time of great joy and great relief, to return to their homeland and rebuild the city and the temple. But, a hundred years is a long time. It may not seem like it when you consider the whole span of Bible history, but from the perspective of a life or a particular generation of people or the history of a nation, a hundred years is really a long time. A lot can change in a hundred years. Attitudes can shift, things can be forgotten and can go by the wayside. Sure enough, that was the case with Israel.

In this period of one hundred years, a lot had changed. Whatever excitement there might’ve been at returning and rebuilding was now gone. The nation had reverted to its old self. The services of the temple had become common and profane. The nation was once again in sorry shape, spiritually, and they blamed God for their troubles. Despite His forbearance, they had the audacity to accuse God of not loving or caring about them. And once again, the fires of God’s judgment were smoldering, except that there was one thing that kept Him from destroying them altogether. Read with me.

Malachi 3:6 “For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

God made a covenant, promising that a Messiah would come from their people and bring salvation to the world through them. God did not destroy them because the promises that were made to them still had to be fulfilled through them in Christ, and God would not break His word. They deserved to be destroyed, but God did not destroy them because of His covenant.

The prophet Balaam, knowing how capable he himself was of deceit and knowing how he could be tempted by bribery to change from one course to another, said this of God:

Numbers 23:19 “God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?”

God does not change. We can't think of God in terms of humans. People change their minds, attitudes, sometimes their personality over time. But God never changes, and He succinctly states that on more than one occasion in His word: *I do not change*. But not only *does* He not change, but He *cannot* change. Today, we'll study what it means to serve an unchanging God.

It's difficult for us to imagine one who never changes because everything in this world changes with the passing of enough time. Everything about our lives is changing from moment to moment, day to day, and year to year. Even the earth and the heavens are changing. Things that look to us like they never change are surely, slowly, and constantly being reshaped by the forces of time.

Psalms 102:25-27 “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.”

Everything from the microscopic atom to the sun's solar system and universe are all in a constant state of flux, transition, and change. Everything God has created is changeable, but God does not change. James made this contrast.

James 1:17 “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights (speaking of heavenly lights: the sun that rises and sets and the stars that are born and later burn out), with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

One may say, *Hasn't God changed throughout the course of human history? Isn't there an old covenant and a new covenant? Haven't the economies through which God has dealt with people in different times changed?* But those things don't mean that God has changed. The Bible is not merely a compilation of books and writings; the Bible has a continuity about it. It is a story. Paul refers to the mystery of the scheme of redemption that spans the ages, from eternity to eternity as **“the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Ephesians 3:10-11)**. The word *manifold* means *variegated or many-colored*, like a grand mosaic work of art. Each part or piece of the divine story--beautiful and significant within itself--every interaction between God and man down through the stream of time seems independent to itself, but it's not, because when all of it is arranged in place by the master artist, a larger picture emerges. That picture here is Christ Jesus and the redemption of the world. There is a continuum from **Genesis 1** to **Revelation 22** and everything that has come to pass has all been according to the purpose that God has had from eternity. He is not playing it by ear. He created the world with purpose, He created man with purpose, and His dealings with man have been with purpose.

II Timothy 1:9 “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,”

So, God's plan throughout the ages has involved change and has brought change, but the plan never changed and God never changed. He does not change and He will not change. But not only is God's

purpose unchanging, God's attributes and personality are unchanging. Some almost seem to believe that the Bible is a story of at least two different Gods: the God revealed in the Old Testament and the God revealed in the New Testament. On one hand, a God of rules, law, of wrath, vengeance, and judgment. On the other, a God of grace, mercy, love, kindness and understanding; a God who is not all that concerned or angered by sin, but who basically handed us the reins to live and worship as we please. But that's not accurate.

You see, the Bible does not give us two revelations of God because God hasn't changed. The Bible, from **Genesis to Revelation** is one revelation of God, all pointing to Christ. Yes, He has established different covenants at different points in time, but all of that has to do with His overarching purpose, and He has not changed. It's not that God has decided not to change, by the way. He didn't just arbitrarily say, *I won't change*; it's that God cannot change, because if He changed, He wouldn't be God. Think about it this way: the perfection of God demands His immutability. If something changes, that change will result in something either being better or worse. If it makes no difference, then it's really not a change. Well, God cannot become more perfect, nor is it possible for God to no longer *be* perfect. God is simply God. He has an immutable nature. He is who He is. He didn't just decide to act a certain way and be a certain way. God is God.

For example, the Bible doesn't say that God merely loves or can love; it says that God IS love. He didn't become love; He IS love, and He has always been love. The Bible doesn't say that God chooses to be holy or that He can be holy and separate from sin; it says that God IS holy. God told His people through Moses in the Old Testament and through Peter in the New Testament, and it is repeated several times in God's word, *You shall be holy, for I am holy*. God was not holy in the Old Testament and then became love and grace in the New Testament, as though there is some contradistinction between the two. God has always been holy and He is still holy, and God has always been love, and He is still love. He will always be all of those things.

God showed incredible grace to His people in the Old Testament. I mean, where do people get the idea that there was no grace under the old covenant? God was a great God of grace even in that dispensation. Can we not read that *Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord*? God could've immediately destroyed Adam and Eve when they sinned in the garden, but He didn't. His grace made a way and His mercy spared them. They paid a price for their sin, but God was still acting in grace. God spared His own people as we read in our text and gave them space for repentance beyond what they deserved. Yes, even back then, God was a God of grace.

By the same token, God promises His wrath even in the New Testament age. In fact, time and again, we are told by Paul, Peter, Jude, and others that the divine strokes of punishment that fell on the people of old are examples to erring and apostate children of God today. To go even a step further, the **Hebrew** writer indicated that the judgment and punishment of God is even worse for one who turns from the truth today, because now we have the full revelation in Christ Jesus. God hasn't changed. The difference is that now, we have the realized blessings and promises of God that are all found in Christ. Those *before* Christ looked forward to Christ and all of those events pointed forward to Christ. God's dealings with them were preparing the way and creating the expectation and hope of Christ. Praise be to God that *now*, we know the fulfillment of those promises, covenants, and blessings. But, you see, God has not changed. God still hates sin as much as He ever did. God still promises to punish sin. And yes, He still loves sinners like He always has. He is the same God who went searching for the rebellious pair in the garden and made a sacrifice and covered their nakedness. He is the same God who told Cain, "**If thou**

doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" (Genesis 4:7) That same God sent His holy and spotless Son down the golden staircase of heaven into this awful, sin-filled world to save it.

God hasn't changed. He has been acting according to the same purpose in accordance with His own attributes from eternity and He will to eternity. He has not gone from being some raging, jealous, vengeful, wrathful, thundering God of old to being some aging, senile, doting, docile grandfather today. He is the same God today that He was to Adam, that He was to Noah, that He was to Abraham, to Moses, to the Jews of Malachi's day, to the church of the first century, to the church a hundred years ago. God simply does not change.

Not only does God's personality not change, but neither does He change in His pronouncements. Just as God is immutable Himself, His word is unbreakable. God cannot lie, the Bible says.

John 17:17 "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."

Not sometimes truth, was truth, can be truth or will be truth—*thy word IS truth*. It's much like when Jesus said, *Before Abraham was, I AM*. God's word is eternal and unbreakable, and the Bible is as relevant and authoritative in our lives today as it was to the early churches to whom the apostles wrote. Time has not rendered it null and void. Cultural, technological, and societal achievements and advancements have not made the word of God irrelevant. Some suggest that God's view of things, His standards and expectations have changed with the times and so should we, and that God just sort of follows our lead. But that's not what the Bible says.

I Peter 1:24-25 "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you."

Mark 13:31 "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away."

Let me remind you that what the Bible calls sin is still sin. Living in a modern world does not change that. The ebb and flow of culture does not change that. God's word is immutable. Sin is still sin, even if the world ignores what God says about it.

John 12:48 "...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Sin is still sin even if the majority celebrates and embraces it.

Exodus 23:2 "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil;"

Sin is still sin even if it's legal. There is a court much higher than the supreme court, I promise you that.

Acts 5:29 "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men."

Sin is still sin even if you don't see the harm in it and you don't recognize it as sin. It is still sin if the Bible teaches that it is sin.

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Sin is still sin even if the church tolerates and accepts it. We see people in religion tolerating and accepting many things that were unthinkable just a few years ago. Some people get the idea that it must be alright then, but it's not alright. God said not to pagans, but to His own wayward people:

Isaiah 5:20 “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”

Sin is still sin even if wicked people try to justify and defy it. People twist the scriptures. **Jude 4** speaks of some who would attempt to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness. Sin is still sin even if we're persecuted for believing in preaching it.

I John 3:13 “Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.”

Immorality is still a sin and will always be a sin in God's eyes because that's how His word describes it. Sins of the flesh, sexual sins that are defined in the word of God—time has not changed that. The supreme court can't change that, the president can't change that, nobody can change that. God's word is immutable, and His word cannot be broken. We may ignore or dismiss sin, we may become flippant about sin and immorality, but it's still sin, and it's a big deal in the eyes of God, whether our culture sees it that way or not.

Unscriptural practices are still unscriptural in God's eyes. It doesn't change over time. God gave a pattern for the church. God revealed His church when He built it in the first century. We have this book to guide us in all matters of faith and practice and that doesn't change. Men may change and drift away from that pattern, but that doesn't mean that God has changed that pattern or that His commandments or examples that were set forth for us no longer matter. You see, God's word and His pronouncements do not change.

God also does not change when it comes to His promises. It's tempting to doubt the promises of God. It's tempting to look at circumstances and current events, and either forget what God has promised or let our faith in his promises waver. It's easy to allow time to cause the fires of excitement and anticipation to burn low and eventually go out. But I would remind you that God often takes a lot of time to bring His promises to pass. It took nearly four thousand years for God's seed promise to Eve to be fulfilled, but in the fullness of time, Christ was born. The Bible says it happened *in the fullness of time*, or at the right time. It took one hundred twenty years for God's warning of judgment to come to Noah and the antediluvians of judgment to come to pass. But finally, sure enough, the sky grew dark, the thunder rumbled, the heavens opened, and it started to rain. It took a long time for Abraham and Sarah to have a son, the son of promise. In fact, it was perplexing to them why it took so long, especially considering their age after God made the promise. But fifteen years later, despite their presumptuous scheme regarding Hagar and Ishmael, baby Isaac was born.

So, you see, God keeps His promises. The **Hebrew** writer warns Christians not to turn away and go back to the sacrifices of the temple and the services of the Jewish economy, but to remain steadfast in Christ. Not to waver from the good confession that they at one time had made. It was tempting to turn away because of the persecution that was bearing down upon them. It was tempting to think that God was not in what they were a part of or that He had forsaken them because of their circumstances.

Hebrews 10:23 “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)”

God has made those who will believe and obey Him many promises and He is true to those promises. He will not go back on those promises. God cannot lie, even when from our human vantage point, we simply can't see how it will work out or how those things can be true. Do you have faith in what God says? Jesus made another promise I want you to look at.

John 14:2-3 "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

It's been two thousand years since Jesus made that promise but it's true. One day, He is going to burst through the blue. One day, He is going to return and bring this world to judgment. Are you ready for that time? You need to be, because God will not forget His promise. God does not change.

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