

Worshipping a Changeless God

Malachi 3:6

Because God Is Unchangeable, His P_____ Are Unchangeable

Here is a key verse of Scripture on this point—*Numbers 23:19*:

*God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent.
Has He said, and will He not do?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?
God's immutability means that not one of those promises—not one of the 800—will ever be forgotten, violated, or unfulfilled. Why? Because what God says, He stands behind forever.*

Here are some of the ones you may remember reading as a child:

- God will never leave us or forsake us (*Hebrews 13:5*).
 - Jesus will come again and take us to Himself (*John 14:3*).
 - Jesus will be with us even to the end of the age (*Matthew 28:20*).
- Those favorites of mine, and your favorites, and all the rest of God's promises are as good today as the day they were spoken because God is unchangeable.

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Which do you think is more likely to stand the test of time—man's plans or God's purposes? We know the answer, and it's based on *Proverbs 19:21*: "There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel—that will stand."

For more documentation, *Ezekiel 24:14* is strong: "I, the Lord, have spoken it; it shall come to pass." In the epic movie, *The Ten Commandments*, Pharaoh often said, "So let it be written, so let it be done." But that's just a movie, and Pharaoh was just a man. But when God speaks something, it will indeed come to pass.

One of the most famous passages on the changeless purposes of God is [Isaiah 46:9–11](#):

*Remember the former things of old,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,
And from ancient times things that are not
yet done,
Saying, 'My counsel shall stand,
And I will do all My pleasure,'*

*Calling a bird of prey from the east,
The man who executes My counsel, from a
far country.
Indeed I have spoken it;
I will also bring it to pass.
I have purposed it;
I will also do it.*

Writing plans and mission and vision statements is in vogue today, and they are worthy disciplines. But as hard as we try, we cannot guarantee the outcome of what we plan. There is no end to the number of businesses that were hurt or ruined in March 2000, when the hi-tech sector of the stock market took a nosedive. Many were afraid it might happen, but no one knew when; so they kept on planning. On the heels of that event came the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, followed by the war in Iraq. Everyone's business plans and many people's individual plans (think of the thousands of reserve military people who were called from their work and homes to go to war) were dramatically changed. Plans and purposes are good, but no one can guarantee they will succeed.

Not only are God's plans perfect to begin with, they are always fulfilled. If you remember from the previous lesson, God's eternal nature means He sees the end of the plan at the same time He sees the beginning. It is all one completed picture from His perspective—the plan, the circumstances, the events, the disruptions, the human changes—they are all part of the plan.

There are some instances in Scripture where God appears to change His mind. Moses prayed and God didn't judge Israel; Hezekiah prayed and didn't die; God didn't judge the Ninevites like He had planned; God said He was sorry He created mankind; God said He was sorry He had made Saul king. How do we explain these seeming changes in God's plans?

God communicates in human language. The Bible talks about God's arms, hands, and eyes, but then says He is a Spirit. The writers of the Bible used anthropomorphisms (assigning of human qualities to God) in order to communicate God's actions in terms we can easily understand. When human beings change their attitudes toward the purposes of God, and then God's purposes are carried out in response to man's responses, it appears that God changes His mind. But He doesn't, even though the Scripture describes it that way because it appears that way to us. In fact, God's purposes included the response of man. Though it may appear God's plan has changed, it has not.

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Because God's provision flows from His unchanging promises, His provision is unchanging as well: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

Who was the God who heard the prayers of Daniel in the lions' den, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace, and Paul and Silas in the jail in Philippi? He is the same God we pray to when we are in our own perilous places. And because God is unchanging, His resources are as available to us as they were available to the saints of old. When I recall what God did for the heroes of the Bible, we have to remember that God lives in the "now" of our needs. At the same moment he saw and met Daniel's need, He sees and is ready to respond to our prayer for help as well. There is no "us" and "them" when it comes to God's provision—He is ready to meet our need at any time.

An old hymn, *Abide with Me*, calls on the God who changes not to come in the hour of need. The first two verses say it well:

Abide with me. Fast falls the eventide.

The darkness deepens. Lord, with me abide.

*When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.
Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day.
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away.*

*Change and decay in all around I see.
Oh, Thou, who changest not, abide with me.*

—H.F. Lyte

The One we need to abide with us is the One who changes not. What good would it do to call on someone whose character and nature changed with the situation or circumstance? The only reason we call on God with confidence is because we know that with Him there is no shadow of turning. All we have needed, His hand has provided. Great is His faithfulness! (from the hymn, *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* —T.O. Chisholm)

Because God Is Unchangeable, His P_____ Is Unchangeable

We never, ever have to “work” our heavenly Father to get what we want. We don’t have to wait until God is in a good mood, or wait until He’s too tired to resist, or butter Him up with flattery. We don’t have to accumulate “brownie points” by having our quiet time every day for a week, giving a large offering, or going to Sunday night and Wednesday night services.

God is always accessible to us, always in the same mood, always ready to hear from us, always ready to meet our needs. *Hebrews 13:8* says it best: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” Isn’t it a blessing to know that God’s personality is as eternal and rock-solid as the rest of His nature?

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Yes, it’s true that God’s promises, purposes, provisions, and personality are unchanging. But it is also true that His prophetic word about those who do not receive His promises and provision of salvation through Christ remains fully unchanged as well. The same God who says, “I am with you always,” (*Matthew 28:20*) also says, “The soul who sins shall die” (*Ezekiel 18:4, 20*).

Dear reader, if you are waiting until the last minute of your life to consider accepting Christ, hoping God might change His mind about sin, or hoping you can talk Him into a different perspective, may I encourage you not to do so. God is as immutable and trustworthy in the hard things that He says as in the graceful. Since no one knows when the last moment of life will be (God knows), I urge you to receive the gift of His Son today and become an inheritor of His promises which will never change. Don’t set yourself up for predictable heartache by hoping God will change. Instead, *you* change—and assure yourself that, whenever life’s last moment comes, you will meet it with His eternal provision.

APPLICATION

1. God does not change. Read the following verses:

[Ecclesiastes 3:14](#)

[Daniel 6:26](#)

[Malachi 3:6](#)

[Hebrews 13:8](#)

[James 1:17](#)

- a. What is the most important aspect of God's unchanging nature to you? Complete the sentence: Because God does not change, I

2. God's promises are guaranteed because God is unchangeable. For a sampling of promises, read the following verses:

[Matthew 28:20](#)

[John 14:3](#)

[John 14:18](#)

[John 15:16](#)

[Hebrews 13:5](#)

- a. What promises do you know of in the Bible that are especially important to you?

3. Read [Proverbs 19:21](#) and [Ezekiel 24:14](#). According to these Scriptures, what is one way God is unchanging?

- a. Read [Isaiah 46:9–11](#). Think back on a time recently when you had to change your plans. What was the reason? Would God ever need to change plans because of that reason?

4. In the Bible, there are places where God said He would judge His people; and then because of prayer or because of repentance, God relented and did not bring judgment. In other places, God seems to have changed His mind. Read the following Scriptures:

[Genesis 6:6–7](#)

[Exodus 32:7–14](#)

[2 Kings 20:1–11](#)

[Jonah 3:1–10](#)

- a. How can you explain the seeming change in God?

5. Read the following Scriptures:

[1 Kings 17:1–16](#)

[Daniel 3:8–30](#)

[Acts 12:5–17](#)

[Acts 16:16–34](#)

- a. How does it make you feel to know that the same God who provided for these people is the God you worship—and that He never changes?
- b. What are some other good gifts that God has given to people you know?
- c. How has God provided for you?

6. Do you ever feel like you have to put God in a good mood before you ask something from Him?

- a. Does knowing the fact that God is unchanging change your viewpoint in dealing with Him? If so, in what ways?