

# 3

## God is Unchanging

Everything changes. Everyone changes. We are in a perpetual state of decay. Our minds fail, our bodies lose their elasticity and our existence takes on the ashen hue of burnt timber and handled money. Nothing stays the same; even heaven changes (Matt. 24:35; Heb. 1:10-12).

**Heaven and earth will pass away**, but My words will not pass away. (Matt. 24:35)

<sup>10</sup> And, “YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS; <sup>11</sup> **THEY WILL PERISH**, BUT YOU REMAIN; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT, <sup>12</sup> AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP; **LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT YOU ARE THE SAME**, AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.” (Heb. 1:10-12)

Change will continue to happen even when time stops. Yet there is only one thing or person that has not nor ever will change, and that is God. **God never changes**. Even with the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God did not change. When God became man, a human nature was added, but God never changed.

God is perpetually the same: subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations. Therefore God is compared to a *rock* (Deut. 32:4, etc.) which remains immovable, when the entire ocean surrounding it is continually in a fluctuating state; even so, though all creatures are subject to change, God is immutable. Because God has no beginning and no ending, He can know no change.<sup>33</sup>

Like the other attributes of God that are described as incommunicable, this one is equally difficult to completely understand. Everything about us changes. “Time,” we note, “marches on” (Eccl. 3:1-8).

When Daniel received understanding concerning the mystery, he blessed the God of heaven and said,

<sup>20</sup> Daniel said, “Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever, For wisdom and power belong to Him. <sup>21</sup> **It is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men And knowledge to men of understanding.** <sup>22</sup> It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him. <sup>23</sup> To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, For You have given me wisdom and power; Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You, For You have made known to us the king's matter.” (Dan. 2:20-23)

John’s revelation of Jesus Christ speaks of this same idea when he notes, “From Him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits who are before His throne” (Rev. 1:4). Times and eras change, but God remains the same. Earlier we saw how God as eternal and self-existing operates outside of time. He has no necessary connection to it. It is not the absence of time that causes “immutability” (unchanging). It is the very nature of God that makes Him immutable. “Not only does God not change, but it is also impossible for Him to change. There are things He cannot do, namely, He cannot act contrary to His immutable (unchangeable) nature.”<sup>34</sup> Only God is unchanging.

Whatever changes has to have the potential to change. But as pure Actuality [i.e. self-existing], God has no potential, so He cannot change. Whatever changes acquires something new. But God cannot acquire anything new, since He could not be better or more complete. Therefore, God cannot change. If He did, He would not be God for He would have lacked some perfection.

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) argues that God alone is immutable (*Summa Theologica*, 1a.9.2). All creatures exist only because of the will of the Creator. His power brought them into existence, and it is His power that keeps them in existence. Therefore, if He withdrew His power they would cease to exist. Whatever can cease to exist is not immutable. Therefore, God alone is immutable; everything else could cease to exist.<sup>35</sup>

Again, let us listen to theologian Emery Bancroft:

The nature, attributes, and will of God are exempt from all changes. Reason teaches us that no change is possible in God, whether of increase or decrease, progress or deterioration, contraction or development. God is absolute perfection; and no change to better is possible. Change to worse would be equally inconsistent with perfection. No cause for such change exists, either outside of God or in God Himself.<sup>36</sup>

God is changeless in His nature, attributes and purpose, and is incapable of growth or decay in any respect. God is devoid of all change. When we think of God’s immutability there are three primary areas for application.

- **First**, God is unchanging in His purpose and plan.

The exact phrase “I, the LORD, have spoken it” occurs 13 times in the Old Testament and all are in Ezekiel (Ezek. 5:13, 15, 17; 17:21, 24; 21:32; 22:14; 24:14; 26:14; 30:12; 34:24; 36:36; 37:14).

“Thus My anger will be spent and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I will be appeased; then they will know that **I, the LORD, have spoken in My zeal when I have spent My wrath upon them.**” (Ezek. 5:13) it will be a reproach, a reviling, a warning and an object of horror to the nations who surround you when I execute judgments against you in anger, wrath and raging rebukes. **I the LORD have spoken.**” (Ezek. 5:15) “Moreover, I will send on you famine and wild beasts, and they will bereave you of children; plague and bloodshed also will pass through you, and I will bring the sword on you. **I, the LORD, have spoken.**” (Ezek. 5:17)

See further Ezekiel 5:5-17.

“All the choice men in all his troops will fall by the sword, and the survivors will be scattered to every wind; and **you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken.**” (Ezek. 17:21 [see further vv.11-24])

“I will also clap My hands together, and I will appease My wrath; **I, the LORD, have spoken.**” (Ezek. 21:17) “You will be fuel for the fire; your blood will be in the midst of the land. **You will not be remembered, for I, the LORD, have spoken.**” (Ezek. 21:32 [see further vv. 28-32])

“Can your heart endure, or can your hands be strong in the days that I will deal with you? **I, the LORD, have spoken and will act.**” (Ezek. 22:14 [see further vv. 13-16])

“**I, the LORD, have spoken; it is coming and I will act.** I will not relent, and I will not pity and I will not be sorry; according to your ways and according to your deeds I will judge you,” declares the Lord GOD. (Ezek. 24:14 [see further vv. 6-14])

“I will make you a bare rock; you will be a place for the spreading of nets. You will be built no more, for **I the LORD have spoken,**” declares the Lord GOD. (Ezek. 26:14 [see further vv. 7-14])

“Moreover, I will make the Nile canals dry And sell the land into the hands of evil men. And I will make the land desolate And all that is in it, By the hand of strangers; **I the LORD have spoken.**” (Ezek. 30:12 [see further vv. 10-12])

All of the occurrences up to this point are in the context of pending judgment. All of the occurrences after this point are in the context of future joy.

“And I, the LORD, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; **I the LORD have spoken.**” (Ezek. 34:24 [see further vv. 20-24])

“Then the nations that are left round about you will know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places and planted that which was desolate; **I, the LORD, have spoken and will do it.**” (Ezek. 36:36 [see further vv. 33-36])

“I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that **I, the LORD, have spoken and done it,**” declares the LORD. (Ezek. 37:14 [see further vv. 11-14])

Notice also the phrase, “**As I live**” (Ezek. 5:11; 14:16, 18, 20; 16:48; 17:16, 19; 18:3; 20:3, 31, 33; 33:11, 27; 34:8; 35:6, 11) and the occurrence of the phrase, “**Thus says the LORD**” in one-hundred and twenty-six verses. The formula solidifies the inevitable nature of what is spoken.

What God has spoken is an expression of His will, and what He wills happens. **He is the only one who has no gap between what He wills and what He does.** God has a singular purpose, and this purpose is His plan. The storyline of the Bible has God as its author. What He wrote is a reflection of who He is. He is unchanging in His plan (Pss. 33:11; 115:3; Prov. 19:21; Isa. 19:17; 46:9-11; Jer. 49:20; 50:45). **Everything God desires, He does.**

<sup>8</sup> Let all the earth fear the LORD; Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. <sup>9</sup> For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast. <sup>10</sup> The LORD nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. <sup>11</sup> **The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.** (Ps. 33:8-11)

<sup>1</sup> Not to us, O LORD, not to us, But to Your name give glory Because of Your lovingkindness, because of Your truth. <sup>2</sup> Why should the nations say, “Where, now, is their God?” <sup>3</sup> **But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.** <sup>4</sup> Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands. <sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; <sup>6</sup> They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; <sup>7</sup> They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. <sup>8</sup> Those who make them will become like them, Everyone who trusts in them. (Ps. 115:1-8)

<sup>5</sup> **“To whom would you liken Me And make Me equal and compare Me, That we would be alike?** <sup>6</sup> Those who lavish gold from the purse And weigh silver on the scale Hire a goldsmith, and he makes it into a god; They bow down, indeed they worship it. <sup>7</sup> They lift it upon the shoulder and carry it; They set it in its place and it stands there. It does not move from its place. Though one may cry to it, it cannot answer; It cannot deliver him from his distress. <sup>8</sup> Remember this, and be assured; Recall it to mind, you transgressors. <sup>9</sup> Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, <sup>10</sup> **Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ‘My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure’;** <sup>11</sup> Calling a bird of prey from the east, The man of My purpose from a far country. Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. **I have planned it, surely I will do it.** (Isa. 46:5-11)

Nothing outside of Him can stop Him from doing all that He desires. “Once God has determined that he will assuredly bring something about, his purpose is unchanging, and it will be achieved.”<sup>37</sup> **No matter how evil our present circumstances might appear to be or how wicked the world continues to become, God’s purpose is being flawlessly executed in the outworking of His eternal plan.** This is His *Story*.

- **Second**, He is unchanging in His promises (Num. 23:19 [cf. vv. 13-26]).

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 it? Or **has He spoken, and will He not make it good?** (Num. 23:19)

What God promises to His people shall happen; it is inescapable. **God has never broken His Word.** What He promises comes to pass. Every description of God is true. It is an accurate portrayal of who God is and what He has done. Every promise He has made to

us, every assertion, and every declaration will come to pass. We are to live in the confidence of His promised Word.

- **Third**, He is unchanging in His person (Mal. 3:5, 6; Heb. 13:8; James 1:17).

**For I, the LORD, do not change;** therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. (Mal. 3:6)

**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever** (Heb. 13:8).<sup>38</sup>

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, **with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.** (James 1:17 [see further vv. 12-18])

Although God’s dealings with His people are impacted by the cross event, His character is constant. **The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament.** His unchanging person guarantees a God outside of fickle and capricious actions. We never have to worry about what “mood” God might be in. God never has a “bad” day. God is never in bondage to hormonal fluctuation. The children of God need not “walk on eggs shells” fearful of backlash and bombastic reactions. This is truly an indescribable blessing. “God causes the universe to change, but in contrast to this change he is ‘the same.’”<sup>39</sup>

With this as the backdrop, God’s immutability gives us two foundational concepts. Both will provide great contentment for us in the midst of life’s uncertainty.

**First**, God is predictable. “The permanence of God’s character guarantees the fulfillment of His promises.”<sup>40</sup>

**Second**, God is dependable. God will never fail His people. His immutability means God is faithful. We never have to worry about whether or not He will come through in the clutch. Because He is unchanging, He is enough. It is because of **whom** He is we can rest in turbulent times and find contentment when hardship persists.

Perhaps the most practical implication of God’s immutability is seen in the storm on the Sea of Galilee where the disciples feared for their lives and Jesus slept in the boat (Luke 8:22-25). Jesus knew who God was, thus He slept knowing God would be predictable and dependable in fulfilling His *Story*. This is what resting in God looks like even as we face various storms. Because God is immutable, He is enough.

