

The Great Unchangeable

“A Never-Changing God in an Ever-Changing World”

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Malachi 3:6

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Introduction

In a sermon on January 7th, 1855, on the topic of the unchanging nature of God, Charles Haddon Spurgeon referenced God as, “*The Great Unchangeable*”

This is the divine attribute of God referred to by theologians as His Immutability or also known as His Unchangeability. That is to say that God is unchanging and unchangeable in His very nature. That God is **ALWAYS** the same.

Immutable: “*im*” being a prefix that means not & mutable is from the Latin meaning “*subject to change*” which is where we get English words like mutation

This attribute of God can be difficult to comprehend because as created finite beings who live in a fallen world, *all we really know is CHANGE*. In fact, God is the only Immutable One, the only One who remains unchanged.

Now some change within our world is designed by God and is a result of His creation.

While other change is a direct result of the fall of man that took place in Genesis 3. There is good change such as the growth of a human being.

My wife and I have been seeing this firsthand with my 8-week-old daughter Reese. Starting to smile, starting to play... We of course want her to grow and change, *but does it have to be so fast?*

On the other hand, there are many changes that create confusion, chaos, and unrest. And until the Unchanging One makes all things right, *the instability of our world will only increase*.

But in the midst of an ever-changing world, there is a God who never changes and remains the same. The God of the Bible is the One who was, the One who is, and the One who will forever be because He is **The Great Unchangeable**. And it is Him we can run to, Him we can come to, Him we can trust in, and Him that we can fully depend on.

Charles Wesley

“And all things, as they change, proclaim the Lord eternally the same.”

So even as we look at all the changes both the good and the bad, we can be reminded that God remains unmoved and unchanged.

While there will be many Scriptures that we look at today, the primary verse of study on this topic of the immutability of God will be Malachi 3:6. Malachi 3:6 is one of, if not the clearest verses on the nature of God when it comes to His immutability because it is not Malachi who is speaking but God Himself announcing that He in fact **DOES NOT CHANGE**.

Malachi 3:6

⁶ *“For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.*

The Book of Malachi

We just read out of the second to last chapter of the final book of the Old Testament. Not all the Old Testament books are laid out in chronological order, but Malachi is correctly placed at the end. The name Malachi means, “*Messenger of God*” and that is precisely the role that Malachi fulfilled as he prophesied during the later days of Nehemiah.

In fact, the book of Nehemiah closes out the Old Testament *historically* while Malachi closes out the Old Testament *prophetically*. What follows is the book of Malachi known as the **intertestamental period**. *This was a period of 400 years of prophetic silence until the New Testament*. Really, the Old Testament closes out **unfinished** and **unfulfilled**.

There are some people who think that God changed from the Old to the New Testament and I just LOVE the fact that we find this verse here in the way we do, solidifying the immutability of God in the whole of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, He remains the same.

The 3rd Chapter of Malachi

Now chapter 2 concludes with the Lord quoting what kind of things the people of Israel have been saying regarding Him. They had been wrongly saying that those who do evil are good in the sight of God and that He delights in them while also questioning the justice of God saying, “*Where is the God of justice?*”

God responds to these preposterous statements in the first verse of chapter 3.

God promises to send them a messenger who would prepare the way for THE Messenger of the covenant to come. *Here is a prophecy regarding both John the Baptist and Jesus Christ.*

Now the following verses, two through five, have both a near and future application and fulfillment. The question is posed, “*Who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears?*” These verses go on to talk about what the Messiah will do when He arrives. How He will refine, purify, and purge them. How He will come to bring judgment on all those who live without the fear of God.

AND IT IS HERE THAT GOD THEN REVEALS THE POWERFUL TRUTH ABOUT HIS NATURE & THEIR FUTURE

Make no mistake about it, while this is recorded by Malachi, this is spoken by God Himself. This is not the *philosophical pontifications* of man, but the *powerful presentation* of who God is spoken by the Almighty Himself.

We find this as we look at the first part of verse 6 as we come to our first point regarding the unchanging nature of God...

God’s Name – His Person

⁶ *“For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.*

“For I am the LORD” or as the NASB puts it, “For I, the LORD”

God is making it extremely clear who He is speaking about, and it is Himself. He leaves no room for confusion or misinterpretation.

Within your Bibles on your lap, you should find that the word, “**LORD**” here is in all caps. This indicates to us that this is the covenant name of God, what we pronounce as Yahweh.

This name comes from when Moses asked God what he should say to the children of Israel if they asked what the name was of the One who sent him. *We find that God responds in this way...*

Exodus 3:14-15

¹⁴ And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” ¹⁵ Moreover God said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: ‘The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.’”

God’s name is a reflection of His person, His being. The implication to this name, “**I AM**” is His immutable faithfulness in fulfilling all His promises. The children of Israel would take this as confirmation that God would do what He had promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

His name reveals to us that He is THE ONLY self-existent and self-sufficient Being. The One who was, the One who is, and the One who will forever be. **HE IS THE I AM**

Thomas Aquinas talked about God’s unchangeability being based on His “I-Am-ness” and refers to Him as “Pure Actuality” who has no potential to change because HE IS WHO HE IS.

This important attribute of God is one that applies to all aspects of His being.

God’s omniscience is immutable, He will never know less, and He will never know more.

God’s omnipotence is immutable, He will never be weaker, and He can never be more powerful.

The love of God is immutable, He cannot be less loving or more loving.

The goodness of God is immutable, He can never be less good or better than He already is.

The wisdom of God is immutable, He will never act foolishly or grow in His wisdom.

EVERY ASPECT ABOUT GOD REMAINS THE SAME FROM ETERNITY PAST TO ETERNITY FUTURE

Arthur W. Pink

Whatever the attributes of God were before the universe was called into existence, they are precisely the same now, and will remain so forever. Necessarily so; for they are the very perfections, the essential qualities of his being. *Semper idem* (always the same) is written across every one of them.

So even in the very name of God, His immutability is put on display for all to see. Now as we move through this verse, *let’s look at next what God says about His own nature...*

God’s Nature – His Immutability

⁶ “For I am the LORD, **I do not change**; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

Change: *šānâ* - shaw-naw’ – to alter, to become different than one’s essence, losing one’s nature

This statement is posed in the negative meaning that He is unable to change.

Unable to differ or to vary. One could say it like this, *“He is who He is, and He is unable to become anything or anyone other than who He is.”*

He is never inconsistent. He is never developing. He has no improvement needed and He will never lack. And yes, there are some things that God cannot do, and we ought to praise Him for that reality!

- He cannot change therefore He cannot lie, He cannot sin, He cannot forget, He cannot fail

A.W. Tozer

He is IMMUTABLE, which means that He has never changed and can never change in any smallest measure. To change He would need to go from better to worse or from worse to better. He cannot do either, for being perfect He cannot become more perfect, and if He were to become less perfect He would be less than God.

Other than God’s statement here in Malachi, do we find this aspect of God’s nature in other places within the Scriptures? Answer: ALL OVER, from Genesis to Revelation...

While Malachi 3:6 serves as the clearest Old Testament proof text, I believe **Hebrews 13:8** to be the clearest New Testament proof text for the immutability of God.

Hebrews 13:8

⁸ Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.

We ought to rejoice in this wonderful truth! He is same Jesus who we find in His preincarnate form throughout the Old Testament whether walking in the garden or wrestling with Jacob or in the fiery furnace. The same Jesus we read about in the gospels is the same Jesus we KNOW today and the same Jesus that we will one day embrace in eternity!

HE DOES NOT CHANGE. He has no mood swings, He has no days off, He doesn’t ever wake up on the wrong side of the bed, He is not fickle, He is not temperamental.

According to James, this is a doctrine that many can be deceived about...

James 1:16-17

¹⁶ Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. ¹⁷ 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.

Here we find that the anything good in our lives comes ultimately from the unchanging goodness of God. There is no variety to Him.

I love variety when it comes to many things and one of those things is food. I can do leftovers once or twice but when you’re eating spaghetti for the fourth day in a row... However, I’m so glad that there is no variety with God! I can wake up every day knowing that the same God who saved me and loved me hasn’t changed His mind!

There is no shadow of turning with Him. A shadow changes throughout the day because the earth is constantly moving and turning away from the sun. *But not so with God!*

It’s important that we understand that God’s immutability does not mean that He is apathetic, cold or stoic. He is immutable *but not immobile* for we know that God works in the affairs of men. That in Him we live and move and have our being.

It is undeniable that the Scripture portrays God as active and moving. Yet in all that He does, in all His ways, He remains consistent and constant. His attributes, His purposes, His will, His motives, and His promises all remain as they have always been.

Psalm 102:25-27

²⁵ Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens *are* the work of Your hands. ²⁶ They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. ²⁷ But You *are* the same, And Your years will have no end.

This portion of the psalms is quoted in **Hebrews 1** when the author begins to layout the argument of who Jesus is and how He is better than all others.

One of the attributes of God that is closely intertwined within the immutability of God is the eternality of God. That is, that in order for God to have always been the same, He has to have always been. And that is precisely how the Scriptures describe Him.

He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, and the Alpha and the Omega.

These are all finite words to describe an infinite God who has always been and will always be.
HE IS THE SAME AND HIS YEARS WILL HAVE NO END.

Job rightly said this about the Lord....

Job 23:13-14

¹³ “But He *is* unique, and who can make Him change? And *whatever* His soul desires, *that* He does.

¹⁴ For He performs *what is* appointed for me, And many such *things are* with Him.

The answer is no one and nothing can make God change! What God wills is what God does. What God says is what comes to pass. *As His word goes forth from His mouth, it will not return to Him void but will accomplish what He pleases and will prosper in thing for which he sent it!*

Notice what Job says here, “For He performs what is appointed for ME.”

You might be asking yourself; this is nice that God doesn't change but what does this have to do with me? It has everything to do with you because God is intimately involved in His creation.

And in our ever-changing world we need a never-changing God!

Paul said this while concluding his chapter on the future of Israel and it reveals a fundamental principle about the nature of God...

Romans 11:29

²⁹ For the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable.

Irrevocable: unregretted, without repentance

Both the calling and the gifts of God are given without Him taking them back... ever.

And this is why we can have the unwavering assurance of our own salvation. Because if this is true when it comes to the nation of Israel, then it is true when it comes to those who have been called by God and received the gift of Jesus Christ. *But more on that in a moment...*

Numbers 23:19

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 is not just different than us, He is in an altogether different category, He is totally **OTHER**.*

We lie, we have regret, we have said we would do something and then didn't do it. We have spoken and not made it good. *Even sometimes with every good intention to do so!*

Yet He is not a man that He would go back on His word or a man that He should change His mind.

Hebrews 6:17-20

¹⁷ Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, ¹⁸ that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*. ¹⁹ This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the *Presence* behind the veil, ²⁰ where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

The one time that we find the word immutable in Scripture, we find it in direct relation to His counsel that is His oath which is unalterable. It isn't just that God doesn't lie it is that it is actually impossible for Him to lie.

This then ought to give us strong consolation: an immense amount of comfort! So that we can lay hold of that hope that God has set before us! *It is this hope in the word of God that anchors our very soul!*

If God was mutable, we would be in trouble. If God could change, we would not have a hope that is certain. *But what we have in Him is both sure and steadfast because He remains unchanged.*

This then brings us to the effect that God's unchangeability has on those He calls His own...

God's People – His Preservation

⁶ *"For I am the LORD, I do not change; Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.*

After God makes this clear statement, He follows it with the direct **effect** that it has on His people. *This is that the sons of Jacob would be preserved and not consumed.*

Therefore → is a marker of result, it is used to show the result of what's been said

Consumed: *kālā* - kaw-law' - to be finished, to have come to an end, to be destroyed

The only reason that the sons of Jacob, those of the nation of Israel were even still in existence at that point after centuries of rebellion was because of the unchanging grace and longsuffering of God.

In fact, this remains true to this day. The only reason Israel is a nation again is because of the unchanging and unfailing nature of God. Israel is back in their land because God said they would be, and God always does what He says.

This love and mercy He showed Israel here in Malachi and the same grace that He has shown Israel to this day and will show Israel in the future *is not based on their goodness but His faithfulness!*

Jeremiah 30:11

¹¹ For I *am* with you,' says the Lord, 'to save you; Though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, Yet I will not make a complete end of you. But I will correct you in justice, And will not let you go altogether unpunished.'

Israel would be corrected time and time again but He would never make a complete end of them. *This counsel of God stands true to this day.*

Now you might say but Israel is living in unbelief! And if you read the Old Testament this should be no surprise to anyone! God said that He would gather them back in the land and they would be in a state of unbelief, but their unbelief does not **CHANGE** the promise of God!

God has not rejected the sons of Jacob. They will never be ultimately consumed, and there will come a time when all Israel is saved. (*Pastor Jack on Sundays when he gets to Romans 11*)

But what does all this mean for us here today?

It showcases that we serve a promise keeping God who will never go back on His word.

I don't believe the truth of Malachi 3:6 is reserved for the sons of Jacob alone but would aptly and appropriately be applied to all those who possess the redemption found in Jesus Christ.

Because if God has remained and remains faithful to Israel, *HOW MUCH MORE* can we trust Him when it comes the new covenant that we have in His Son Jesus Christ?

2 Corinthians 1:20-22

²⁰ For all the promises of God in Him *are* Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. ²¹ Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, ²² who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

We who were once afar off have now been brought near by His blood. We who were aliens and strangers are now members of the household of God and ALL the promises of God are not only YES but even more than that they are AMEN in Him.

And the only reason that we are not consumed, that we are not destroyed is because of the faithful mercies of God which are new and available to us each and every day.

Lamentations 3:22-23

²² *Through* the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. ²³ *They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness.*

This isn't to say life won't have its challenges because it absolutely will, but we can always have the assurance that God will see us through! That His promises toward us will not be altered.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9

⁸ *We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; *we are* perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—

Why? Because of the immutability of God. A righteous man may fall seven times but rise again!

Even in the case of our own failure and unbelief at times, this does not change Him!

2 Timothy 2:13

¹³ If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

Deny: contradict, to be false to oneself or behave in a way that is untrue to one's real self

And it is this unchangeable nature that we can lean on and run to.

Psalm 46:1-3

God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; ³ *Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled, *Though* the mountains shake with its swelling. *Selah*

The understanding of this divine attribute of God changes everything! No need to fear, no need to worry, no need for anything because He is our **FIRM FOUNDATION!**

Psalm 62:2, 6-8

² He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *He is* my defense; I shall not be greatly moved. ⁶ He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *He is* my defense; I shall not be moved. ⁷ In God *is* my salvation and my glory; The rock of my strength, *And* my refuge, *is* in God. ⁸ Trust in Him at all times, you people; Pour out your heart before Him; God *is* a refuge for us. *Selah*

Because God is unmoved, we can experience this stability when He is our rock, when He is our defense, when He is our refuge. *And we too shall not be MOVED.*

And though everything in our lives can change, it is as we cast ourselves upon His immutability that we can remain immovable and steadfast in the midst of the changing chaos that surrounds us.

Hebrews 7:24-25

²⁴ But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. ²⁵ Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

He always lives & He never changes. This is our hope that God will see us through to the uttermost.

As we begin to close, let me point your attention one last time to the third chapter of the book of Malachi... look with me at the verse that directly follows what we've been studying... verse 7.

⁷ Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," Says the Lord of hosts.

Malachi 3:6 was spoken by God to a disobedient and rebellious people. And His call of return **REMAINS** the same to this day. *You can come back. You can return to Him.*

A.W. Tozer (to quote Tozer once more)

"God never changes moods or cools off in His affections or loses enthusiasm. His attitude toward sin is now the same as it was when He drove out the sinful man from the garden, and His attitude toward the sinner the same as when He stretched forth His hand and cried, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'"

For the already forgiven and redeemed believer, the truth of this doctrine is so comforting and so reassuring. **But for the unbeliever**, it ought to be beyond terrifying. His attitude toward sin has not changed and His judgment toward sin will come to pass. *He will not grade your eternity on a curve.* The Bible describes that the requirement for heaven is perfection, and that requirement will not change.

But His attitude toward the sinner has also not changed as the invitation still stands as **COME**. Come to Jesus and He will fulfill that requirement of perfection for you. He lived the life you could not live, and He died the death you deserved and all that you would be with Him in eternity.

While God remains unchanged, we are changing and experiencing change every day.

I'm not sure if you know this but you are dying, your outward man is perishing. Every day is one step closer to eternity for every one of us. We are not promised tomorrow and outside of Christ we have no certainty and no stability.

My Hope is Built on Nothing Less

My hope is built on nothing less Than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, But wholly lean on Jesus' Name. On Christ the solid Rock I stand, All other ground is sinking sand; All other ground is sinking sand. When darkness veils His lovely face, I rest on His unchanging grace. In every high and stormy gale, My anchor holds within the veil.

Where is your hope? Who do you trust? Where do you stand?

ALL OTHER GROUND IS SINKING SAND