

Malachi 3:6

God is Unchanging

Open your Bible to...

Mal. 3:6 “I the Lord do not change...”

Pray

Intro

✓ Intro

In 1965 the American Folk group, the *Byrd's* released what would become a #1 hit song, *Turn! Turn! Turn!* The lyrics were lifted almost directly from the third chapter of Ecclesiastes where we hear them sing...(que Dave to play)

*To everything turn, turn, turn
There is a season turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose under Heaven
A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep*

The Biblical text and lyrics express the changing nature of life that Solomon observed where ultimately nothing in life remains the same for everything, and everyone under the sun changes.

Nothing remains the same.

Ex. Wash my beautiful metallic British Racing Green Miata—it doesn't stay beautiful!

While change is sometimes welcome, like the birth of a child, or a promotion with a big increase in pay, more often than not change in life brings anxiety, stress, sleepless nights and a general feeling of helplessness to our soul.

In part because change reminds us that life is very uncertain and that there is nothing and no one on earth that can provide a firm foundation upon which we can build a secure life.

No one that is except for God who does not live under the sun—for He transcends all that He created and as such is not subject to change.

Thus, as we just read in Malachi, God declared...

"I the Lord do not change..."

He is the same, yesterday, today and forever...

A great comfort and a firm foundation upon which we can confidently build our lives!

So, in our continuing study of the attributes of God we turn our attention now to His unchangeability...

And as we do let's remember that it is God's will for each of us to continually grow in our understanding of Him and His nature.

As Paul prayed for his friends at Colossae...

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you...that you may walk worthy

of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ~ Colossians 1:9-10

So, we add to our study of God's divine attributes another beautiful aspect of His perfect nature that will help us to know Him better that we might love Him more.

God is unchanging ~ a definition

✓ God is unchanging

Let's begin our study by introducing you to the theological term used to describe God's unchanging nature...

That word is immutability.

It comes to us from the Latin *mutare* (*mu-tar-a*), which means "change".

Add the prefix, "*im*", which means "*without*", and you get immutable — without change.

When we say that God is immutable, we mean that God does not change in His nature, His will and His mind.

What He is, what He wills, and what He thinks, He has always been and will always be...

...perfectly—unchangeably—perpetually the same!

In fact, His immutability tells us that He cannot change.

While everything else in Creation—people and animals, angels and demons, planets and pets, all change...

...God alone cannot change—He is eternally the same!

So, in a world where everything changes—sometimes so fast we can't keep it, it's a great comfort to know that we can build our lives upon the sure foundation of the God Who never changes!

The Biblical Foundation that God is Unchanging

✓ God is unchanging

Many of God's prophets, along with God's own testimony affirm that He does not change. For example, in addition to our opening text the psalmist tells us...

*"Of old You laid the foundation of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.*

*"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.*

*But You are the same,
And Your years will have no end."*
Psalm 102:25-27

That is, the psalmist reminds us that while everyone and everything in the universe will grow old, wear out, die or collapse upon itself like a black hole...

God alone never ages, is never wearied, never gathers dust, doesn't lose His hearing and His glory never fades!

Next we turn to the author of Hebrews reveals that Jesus is also immutable, where he writes...

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” ~ Hebrews 13:8

Since only God never changes, Jesus Who is the same yesterday, today and forever must be God!

A great proof text of Jesus’ divinity.

Jesus’ half-brother James, rather poetically informs us that...

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.”

James 1:17 NIV

James’ point is that in his day, time was measured by the changing shadows on the face of a sundial as the sun moved across the sky.

But God Who existed before the sun was created has no shifting shadows to measure the passing of time in His eternal existence.

And finally, back during the time of the Exodus we learn that God spoke of His unchangeability when He instructed Balaam to tell Balak the king of the Moab that...

*“God is not a man, so he does not lie.
He is not human, so he does not change his mind.
Has he ever spoken and failed to act?
Has he ever promised and not carried it through?”*

Numbers 23:19 NLT

The point here is that since God knows all things, from the beginning to the end...

There is nothing that can happen in the future, nor any new information He might discover that would cause God to change His mind or to break His promises.

So, we conclude that the Bible affirms the truth that God is immutable—He is unchanging...in His will, His nature and His mind.

Logically it follows that God cannot change

In addition to the testimony of Scripture there are a number of logical reasons that the God cannot change...

...while time doesn't allow us to cover all of the reasons that this is true it would be profitable to consider the following.

- 1) God cannot change because He is eternal

God is not subject to time because His eternal nature is timeless.

As such He does not experience events sequentially.

That is, there is no past, present and future in God's existence.

God dwells in the eternal present "now", where every event that was, is and will be is right now for God!

The point is that for something, or someone, to change, the change must happen in some sequence of chronological order...

...there must be a point in time before the change and a point in time after the change.

Ex. Married

On August 1st, 1980, I was a single man, but on August 2nd I changed and became a married man.

My marital status changed at a point in time when the officiating pastor said...

“I now pronounce you man and wife.”

At that moment I changed from being single to being a married man.

But God is eternal—there are no moments, minutes, hours or days in God’s experience—it’s all the same for Him! Remember...

He existed before time began (ref. 2Timothy 1:9).

He created time when He made the worlds.

And He is not subject to or bound by anything that He created.

Therefore, God cannot change because change must happen within the constraints of time where there is a sequence of events, a before and after...

But there is not a before and after in God’s existence.

He exists in the eternal now.

So, God cannot change because He is above and beyond time.

2) God does cannot change because He is perfect

Think about it...

...any change to anything, is done to make something better or worse, which means that something must be added or removed.

Ex. Teeth

Many of you were born with an imperfect bite that required braces to correct that imperfection—which may have included removing some teeth to perfect your bite.

But even after you've got a perfect smile you may need the addition of crown to replace a bad tooth.

The point is that everything in Creation is under the curse and therefore in constant need of change to add, or remove some imperfection.

But God Who is perfect, has no imperfections in Him that would require the addition of something to improve His nature...

...or the removal of some flaw to correct His character.

Therefore, God does not change because a perfect God has no need to change.

The implications of God's unchanging nature

√ The implication of God's unchanging nature

The implications of God's unchanging nature are a great comfort to the saint, but a sober warning to the sinner...

...let's begin with the comfort that God's immutability is to you and me His saints.

- 1) Because God is unchangeable, we can be sure that His Word will never fail

Therefore, we who have trusted in Christ can be confident that God will keep every promise that He has made in the Bible!

Ex. Something like 5,000 promises in the Bible

In a world where promises are routinely broken in marriage, business, and personal relationships we can take great comfort in the knowledge that God will never break a single promise that He has made to us!

Ap. If you have put your trust in Jesus for salvation, then you rest assured that you will live forever in Heaven because, Jesus said...

"Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life." ~ John 6:47

Since God is unchanging, His Word cannot change, nor His promises fail thus we can be sure that every promise He has made to us will come to pass!

Ap. If you don't know God

God's immutable word is also a sober warning to those who don't know Him.

Since God's Word never changes then His warning about His coming judgement upon those who have rejected His free offer of salvation is sure.

Thus, you need to know that there will be a future judgement just as the Bible predicts where all who don't have a personal born-again relationship with Jesus will experience God's wrath.

Listen to what Jesus, in His unchanging Word said...

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

John 3:36

So, God’s unchanging word is a comfort to the saint, and a warning to the unconverted that no one should ignore!

- 2) Because God does not change, His attributes never diminish

God’s immutability reminds us that whatever God is, He has always been, and will always be.

For example, God’s unchanging nature means that His power will never fade.

He isn’t omnipotent today, and a weakling tomorrow.

God is and always will be all-powerful and therefore He will always have the power to deliver us from every enemy and evil!

- Ex. WW2 Vets that stormed Normandy on D-Day vs. God

Those strong young men who liberated Europe now have to be pushed around in wheelchairs.

While we’ll always respect what they did at the pinnacle of their youthful vigor we wouldn’t look to them today to protect us from Hezbollah, Hamas, or China.

But because God never changes His power never fades. Therefore, He is just as able to storm the beaches held under Satan’s power today...

...as when He delivered the Hebrew children from the wrath of Pharaoh 2,800 years ago!

So you can be sure that God will always have the power to rescue you for every foe.

- 3) Because God doesn't change, His moral law is always relevant

Because God is unchanging it follows that whatever He declared to be true and morally right is still true and will always be true.

And whatever He says is evil, is and always will be evil.

And whatever He says is good, is and always will be good.

In every age, every situation, and in every culture.

While social norms of what is considered to be right and wrong are constantly changing, God's immutability assures us that ultimately what God says...

Is true, is always true.

What God says is evil, is always evil.

What God says is ungodly, is always ungodly.

So, we can reject anyone, any trend, any new philosophy, and any new interpretation that tells us that the Bible's moral instructions are no longer valid.

- Ex. Sin is still sin

The sad reality today is that even people in the Church are trying to change God's word to accommodate their sinful desires. For example, one newer rendition of the Bible is titled...

"Good as New: A Radical Retelling of Scripture"

It is written (not translated) by Englishman John Henson, who is an anti-fundamentalist Baptist.

It is promoted as being “women, gay and sinner friendly”—as if God’s unaltered Word is somehow not sinner friendly...

I seem to remember Paul writing (1Timothy 1:15)...

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”

That sure sound sinner friendly to me!

Well, in any event Henson has removed any and all scriptures that communicate God’s moral boundaries for the expression of human sexuality.

To wit he removed eight epistles from the New Testament that didn’t fit his moral worldview and radically changed the meaning of the scriptures he did leave in.

For example, in 1Corinthians 7:2 the apostle Paul writes...

“Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” ~ NKJV

Ah, but that’s too narrow for Henson who believes that we can simply change God’s word to accommodate whatever sinful desire we have. So, he altered Paul’s words to read...

“My advice is for everyone to have a regular partner...(not a husband or a wife—rather, get yourself a regular hook up partner) If you know you

have strong needs, get yourself a partner. Better than being frustrated!"

It's already an outrage that anyone would be so deceitful and academically arrogant as to literally change the meaning of the original Biblical text...

But worse is that the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time of publication, Rowan Williams, leader of the Church of England and 77 million Anglicans worldwide wrote a glowing endorsement of Henson's work!

The result is that an entire Christian denomination, and anyone reading Henson's work now thinks that God's Word has changed to accommodate modern sexual promiscuity!

As if God, who created sex, doesn't know what's best for us in the expression of human sexuality.

However, God's unchanging will reminds us that His word is also unchanging, and that His moral imperatives about what is right and wrong, sinful or holy, do not change...

...what God said is sinful, is and always will be sinful.

Objections to the doctrine that God is Unchanging

✓ Objections

While you may agree that God is unchanging if you're familiar with the Bible, you may also be thinking to yourself...

"Hold on pastor Paul, doesn't the Bible say that God has changed His mind...wouldn't that destroy

everything you just said about God's unchanging mind?"

And you would be correct as some translations of the Bible do in fact render a few verses in the Bible to say that God has changed His mind. For example, in the 1995 NASB, Exodus 32:14 is translated...

"So the Lord changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people."

That sure sounds like it goes against everything I've said so far about God being unchanging.

So how do we respond?

Biblically and logically!

That is, we have to look at the context of Exodus 32:14 in light of what we know to be true about God and man. For example...

With regard to people, it is common for us to change our minds.

This happens all the time because when we receive new information, or circumstances change that require us to have a different attitude or to take a different direction...

...we change our minds.

Ex. I changed my mind about the usefulness of computers

Back in 1984 my uncle who was a professor at San Jose State University at the time showed me his new home computer—the original MacIntosh!

He was so excited to show me how the word processor worked, the cool financial application to balance a check book, and the fun graphic arts program.

Even though I respected him as an accomplished academic, and appreciated his excitement over his new home computer, I just didn't see the value and said, confidently I might add...

"I will never own a home computer!"

Well, now we have something like 5 computers in our home, plus an iPad, a Kindle reader, and a Fitbit! And I use a computer every day at work!

Clearly, I have changed my mind about the usefulness of owning a personal computer!

Why? Because I have acquired new knowledge and come to understand the many benefits of owning a computer that I didn't possess in 1984.

Back to God, let me ask you a couple of questions...

"Does God ever learn anything new?"

Is there any information that God doesn't already know?"

Answer—No!

Why? Because God is omniscient (all-knowing), therefore there is nothing new for Him to learn nor will there ever be some new information that He doesn't already know.

So, when the Bible says that God changed His mind, it is understood to mean...

...that people changed their response to God's unchanging nature.

That's why the NKJV and most other English translations render Exodus 32:14...

"So the Lord relented (rather than "changed His mind") from the harm which He said He would do to His people."

We see this played out in the book of Jonah where God sent His prophet to proclaim...

"In forty days, Nineveh shall be destroyed!"
Jonah 3:4

But later we read that God relented of that promised judgement because the people of Ninevah changed their behavior by repenting in sackcloth and ashes!

The fact is that God would have destroyed Ninevah just as He promised...

...but He withheld that judgment because the people changed their behavior.

God didn't change, nor did He change His mind, rather because the people of Ninevah changed their behavior they moved out from under God's unchanging justice and wrath...

...to experience instead His unchanging mercy and grace.

Ex. God's nature can be likened to bicycling in the wind (explain)

Like the wind, God doesn't change His mind, we change our experience with God as we respond to His unchanging nature...

If we resist His will, it is like bicycling into the spiritual headwind of His unchanging justice and wrath that leads to eternal death.

On the other hand, if we repent (turn around) we now have the tailwind of His unchanging love and mercy pushing us along to eternal life!

The Blessings & Benefits that God is Unchanging

√ Blessings & Benefits

Before we send you off to grab lunch, we want to look at the practical benefits of knowing that God is immutable...

...those benefits include the following.

- 1) God's unchanging nature provides us with a firm foundation to build our lives upon

In a world where everything is always changing it is a great blessing to know that God never changes...

...because we can then make wise choices based upon the unchanging word of God.

Ex. Provision

Jesus' unchanging promise is...

"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need."

Matthew 6:33 NLT

Did you hear that?

Jesus said that if you would make Him and His Kingdom the priority in your life...

...then He will provide you with everything you need in life.

It doesn't how unstable the economy is, or what your current job situation is like, if you'll place your trust in Jesus' unchanging promise and live your out your faith without compromise...

...you will sleep peacefully at night knowing that somehow God will work everything out to provide for you and your family.

Ex. Put God first ~ learning about tithing

2) God will always be faithful

I wish it were not true, but the reality is that we have all at one time or another experienced the unfaithfulness of a friend or loved one.

It may have been a spouse who broke their promise to love you exclusively all the days of his or her life.

Or a once trusted friend who makes all sorts of promises to meet you for dinner, or a day at the lake but of late is always canceling on the day of the event.

While we will experience unfaithfulness in life, because God is unchanging, we can be sure that He will always be faithful to us. Paul puts it this way...

“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.” ~ 2 Timothy 2:13

So, we can always count on God to be faithful to us even when we don't keep our promises to Him...

...because God never changes you will never be forsaken!

Ex. Peter's promise to never forsake or deny the Lord

Yet, despite Peter's unfaithfulness Jesus was faithful to restore Peter to his place in ministry.

Ap. Have you forsaken the Lord?

Give your life back to Jesus and let Him do a work of restoration in your life.

3) God's unchanging nature doesn't mean He's boring

I would imagine at this point that more than a few of you may be thinking...

“I don't mean to be blasphemous, pastor, but if God never changes won't we get bored of Him after a few million years in Heaven?”

After there are some changes in life that I love, like the changing of the seasons...

The fresh blossoms of Spring, the clear blue skies of Summer, the changing color of the leaves in Fall and the crisp sound of snow under my skis in Winter.

So, I'm having a little trouble thinking about eternity and seeing the same ole unchanging God, day in and day forever...

...wouldn't that make it difficult to get excited about worshipping Him?

✓ Great question!

God's immutability—His unchanging nature doesn't mean that God is boring.

Ex. The Ferrari 250 California Spyder ~ considered the most beautiful car ever made

Last sold at auction for \$17,875 million! But you can't appreciate it's beauty from just one angle. That's why when the car is displayed at auction it's on rotating dais...

As the platform turns you are able to see the front, side, and rear of the car.

But you can't see the whole beauty of the design from just one angle because our human perspective is limited—we're finite beings.

Back to Heaven we must remember that our unchanging God is also infinitely beautiful, holy and loving...

Which means that from our finite human perspective we simply can't see nor appreciate every aspect of God's beauty, His holiness or His love from one angle.

Well in eternity we will be exposed to new and different perspectives of God's beauty, holiness and love as He turns so to speak to reveal to us some new aspect His infinite Being!

So, while God is unchanging in His nature, His will and His mind, because He is infinite, we will never be bored as we explore the depths of God's nature...

...rather, as John describes in the Revelation we will discover infinite reasons to rejoice and worship the God Who loves us!

Close

✓ God is unchanging

In our opening verse from Malachi, we read...

“I the Lord do not change...”

But let me now give you the context of the rest of the verse, which reads...

“Therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.”

God’s point is that despite our sins and unfaithfulness, like the sons of Jacob (Israel), God has not changed His mind about us!

So, even though we are guilty of mummering and complaining about God rather than offering Him thanksgiving.

When we find ourselves still struggling with some form of idolatry in our life whereby, we give the best of ourselves, our time and talent to someone, or some hobby other than God.

God reminds us here in Malachi that because He does not change, we are not consumed!

That’s because He knows our weakness and that we are always changing—sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse!

Today we might be a man or woman with the faith to take on a giant.

Tomorrow, we might not be able to muster the faith to get out of bed!

And yet, because God does not change, He does not consume us...

He will always love us and will always be faithful to keep His promise to bring those who have trusted in Christ safely to the home that He has prepared for us (ref. Phil. 1:6).

Therefore, the unchanging nature of God should motivate us to worship Him with a greater passion and to love Him more fervently.