



The Cross & Anchor

From The Elders of Zearing Christian Church

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THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

God is eternal (Ps. 90:2). When we confess that truth, we're saying much more than just He always has been and will be around. We're also saying that **God has not ever and does not change**. James, the brother of Jesus, wrote in chapter 1 of his letter that God is *"the Father of Lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. (1:17)"* Change is something inherent to us. We come into existence, we grow, we learn new things, we age, & we adapt to situations both social and economic before we eventually die. We are even saved by God with a great

change of our nature from one of sin to one of righteousness. God, however, does none of those things. He has always existed, He has always been perfect, He has always known everything, He is unaffected by the passing of time because He exists outside of time, and never adapts to situations in time because they are according to His ordained providence in the first place. God said to Moses *"I AM who I AM"* (Ex. 3:14). He has always been and always will be, and He has always been and always will be the same (Ps. 102:25-27, Mal. 3:6). He is immortal, incorruptible,

and unchangeable in His nature and being, in His thoughts and decrees, and in His providential work (1 Sam. 15:29, Ps. 138:8, Is. 41:4, Rom. 1:23, 1 Tim. 1:17, Heb. 1:11-12, 13:8). The God of the Old Testament is the same God of the New Testament. His ordained plan has never changed and indeed will never change (Eph. 3:11). *"God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind (Num. 23:19)."* Because of this immutability in the character and being of God, we can always count on God.

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His faithfulness is great because *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning;"* (Lam. 3:22-23).

MALACHI 3:6

"For I the LORD do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed"

THE GOD WHO IS PATIENT: MEDITATING ON MALACHI 3:6

The word 'consumed' in the Hebrew means just that. It means to cease to be and to be destroyed. When God disciplines His people and makes a correction, it is never to destroy us, but to bring about a much-needed change so that we don't miss our providence.

What we discover is a steadfast God Who through time and into eternity is always faithful to His Word. He is long-suffering and shows great goodness by His patience. He is unchanging and unchangeable.

By grace through faith in Jesus Christ, He has given to the Church His Body. In the scripture before us God has had to bring some correction but wants His people to know that He hasn't changed, He is still merciful, tender, loving, and good.

THE GOD WHO IS ALWAYS FAITHFUL

To be faithful is to be reliable, steadfast, and unwavering. The Bible speaks of the faithful God in light of His unchangeableness. Scripture speaks often of God's faithfulness. Over and over again we learn from the word of God that when He says He will do something, He does it even if it seems impossible to us. When God says something is going to happen, it happens. That is true for the

past, the present, and the future. If that wasn't the case then God would not be God. So we can always rely on God's faithful promises to His people. I cannot think of God failing to be faithful to His word. In 1 Kings 8:56 King Solomon confesses *"Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant."* God does not have to work at being faithful like us.

Psalm 89:8 says *"O Lord God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O Lord, with your faithfulness all around you?"* When a person walks consistently with God in humble service to Him, he or she can be called faithful. In Eph. 1 and Col. 1, Paul addresses his letters to those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. God's word tells us that we receive this faithfulness from the Holy

Spirit. I believe the fullness of these gifts from the Holy Spirit is realized by walking with God and yielding to His Spirit. The Old Testament teaches that *"The righteous shall live by his faith."* (Habakkuk 2:4). God is faithful to His children and by His grace we will hear the words of God spoken to us in paradise *"Well done, good and faithful servant."* Praise the Lord!



J E S U S , O U R S U R E A N D S T E A D Y A N C H O R

We are a fickle lot. We like consistency. We get up at nearly the same time every morning and do most things the same way each time. Yet, we like “new and improved.” In fact, advertising is all about getting us to buy the new widget that we just can’t do without. Would you really buy a product that was advertised as “old and the same”? Even, original Coca-Cola is now Classic Coke after the new and improved Coke failed.

Here's my point: we need an anchor, a reference point that we can go back to. What good is a compass that doesn't point north? We find that anchor in Jesus Christ. Life without Christ is chaos. Oh, we may muddle around and try

to make ourselves look good on the outside, but on the inside, we are a wreck.

I have been at sea for nearly half of my adult life. I enjoy the vastness of the ocean and the beauty of all that God has created. On the open ocean there is little to distract me from being awed by God. The seas can be flat calm or an absolute torrent. In those rough seas, a ship has two choices: point your ship into the wind and ride it out or find a place to anchor. I've experienced both, and anchoring is by far the better alternative. When the writer of Hebrews says: “*Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.*” (Heb 13:8), he highlights the anchor for our soul. Je-

sus does not change. We are not following a moving target. We are not just “riding things out”. We are standing on a firm foundation: Jesus Christ. I urge you to place your faith in Jesus; trust Him today and forever.

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them.”

- Hebrews 13:8-9 (ESV)

There is No Eclipse of His Brightness

An Excerpt from *The Immutability of God* by Thomas Watson

God is unchangeable in His nature. His essence shines with a fixed luster. *“Who does not change like shifting shadows,”* James 1:17. *“You remain the same, and your years will never end,”* Psalm 102:27. All created things are full of vicissitudes. Princes and emperors are subject to change. Sesostris, an Egyptian prince, having subdued many kings in war, made them draw his chariot, like horses, as if he intended them to eat grass, as God did King Nebuchadnezzar. The crown has many successors. Kingdoms have their eclipses and convulsions. What has become of the glory of Athens? The pomp of Troy? [Now corn grows, where the great city of Troy once stood]. Though kingdoms have a head of gold, they have feet of clay. The heavens change. *“They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end.”* Psalm 102:26-27. The heavens are the most ancient records, where God has written his glory with a sunbeam—yet these shall change. Though I do not think they shall be destroyed as to their substance—yet they shall be changed as to their qualities; they shall melt with fervent heat, and so be more refined and purified. 2 Peter 3:12. Thus the heavens shall be changed—but not he who dwells in heaven. *“I am the Lord, and I do not change.”*

The best saints have their eclipses and changes. Look upon a Christian in his spiritual estate, and he is full of variation. Though the seed of grace does not die—yet its beauty and activity often wither. A Christian has his anguish fits in piety. Sometimes his faith is at a high tide—and sometimes low ebb; sometimes his love flames—and at another time is like fire in the embers, and he has lost his first love. How strong was David's grace at one time! *“God is my rock, in him will I trust.”* At another time he says, *“I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul.”* What Christian can say he does not find a change in his graces; that the bow of his faith never unbends, the strings of his violin never slacken? Surely we shall never meet with such Christians until we meet them in heaven! But God is without any shadow of change.

The angels were subject to change; they were created holy—but mutable. *“The angels which kept not their first estate.”* Jude 6. These morning stars of heaven were falling stars. But God's glory shines with a fixed brightness. In God there is nothing which can change, for better or worse. He cannot change for the better—because then he would not now be perfect. He cannot change for the worse—for then he would cease to be perfect. He is immutably holy, immutably good; there is no shadow of change in him.

F R O M T H E P A S T O R ' S D E S K

If we're going to look at the unchangeableness of God then we must also address the perceived elephant in the room; what are we to make of the Bible passages that seem to say that God does sometimes change His mind? For example, Genesis 6:6 says *“the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”* 1 Samuel 15:11 God says *“I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following me...”* And in Jonah, God says He is going to destroy Nineveh in 40 days but they repent and *“When God saw what they did...God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them”* (Jon. 3:10). Are we to understand from these that God has a heart & that He is emotionally influ-

enced by us to give or withhold His love and grace? In a word, no. God is impassable, which simply means He does not suffer or have emotion the same way we do. If He did, He would not be perfect. His emotions, such as His love or anger, are intentional expressions of His perfect being. As God is love, so His love is not caused or affected by our actions, but flows from His own nature according to His own will. Where we are often involuntarily stimulated emotionally in response to the actions of others and act according to those influenced feelings, God is not and does not; He's simply not like us, He is always consistent with His nature.

What's reflected in these passages, then, is the same kind of figurative language we see elsewhere in scripture to help us understand God. He describes things in human terms we can understand. He doesn't have a heart or change His mind anymore than He has a face (Num. 6:25), hands (Isa. 23:11), or eyes (Ps. 34:15). But when Solomon says in Proverbs 15:3 that *“The eyes of the Lord are in every place”* we can understand that He's saying that God is everywhere and sees everything. Similarly, with a passage like Genesis 6:6 we can understand it's anthropopathic language describing God's mournfulness over mankind's sin. He clearly didn't ‘change His mind’ about creating man or we wouldn't exist today.