

# God's Immutability I

by Richard Owen Roberts

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*The sermon explores the profound truth of God's immutability, emphasizing His unchanging nature and its implications for believers.*

**Duration:** 26:14

**Scripture:** Proverbs 19:21, Isaiah 14:24, Isaiah 46:9-10, Daniel 6:25-27, Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 7:25, Hebrews 13:8

**Topics:** "Character Of God"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the inevitability of decay and change in the world around us. He uses examples like the changing seasons and the decay of possessions to illustrate this point. The preacher then focuses on a passage from Malachi 3, where God declares that He does not change. He highlights the significance of this statement, emphasizing that while we can never fully comprehend God, His nature remains constant throughout eternity. The preacher concludes by affirming that God is holy and benevolent, and will always be so.

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## Transcript

And I invite you to turn with me, please, to the Book of Malachi, where we are going to read from the third chapter, the Book of Malachi, at chapter 3. And here we have one of the briefest and yet most consequential statements concerning God, found anywhere in Scripture. Beginning, please, at verse 1 of Malachi 3, Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me. And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in.

Behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts, that who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth. For he is like a refiner's fire, and like a fuller's soap. And he shall sit as a refiner, and as a purifier of silver.

And he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, as in former years. And I will come near to you, to judgment.

And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right. And hear not me, saith the Lord of hosts, for I am the Lord, I change not.

Therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.

Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. And she said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me.

Yet ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation, bringing all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts. If I will not open unto you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sake, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed, for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts. Your words have been stout against me, saith the Lord.

Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against thee? Ye have said it is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that ye have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy, yea, they that work wickedness are set up, yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. And they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard. And a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that sought upon his name.

And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth not. In particular, we are going to think now about verse 6. For I am the Lord, I change not.

Everything that is upon my heart to say this morning is summed up in those simple words. I am the Lord, I change not. Now in these days we are seeking to search the scriptures and to find out all that we can of what God reveals concerning himself.

But while we do this, we must forever retain in our minds the realization that there is simply no way we can exhaust this subject. And were we to spend all the rest of our days seeking to know God and to understand more fully and completely that which he reveals about himself in scripture, we would still know very, very little in comparison to what there is to know. And even after spending one trillion years in God's presence in eternity, we will then discern that we still know scarcely nothing of the ways of God.

For God's ways are absolutely inexhaustible. And there is no way that mortal man, even in the glorified state, can ever exhaust the truth of God. In the book of Job there are many statements dealing with the impossibility of coming fully to grips with the knowledge of God.

Zohar asked Job, as it's recorded in the eleventh chapter, Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? Well, Job wasn't so foolish as to think he could. Some, it would appear, who are under the impression that God can be understood and figured out. But in the twenty-sixth chapter, Job, in responding to one of his so-called friends, there's a long list of things that God is and God has done.

And then, in summarizing that magnificent list, Job said, Lo, these are part of his way. But how little a portion of him is ever heard. And we come to our subject this morning with a realization that even though we are seeking to understand the immutability of God and to come face to face with the truth, I change not.

Our best effort will still leave us woefully and inadequately prepared to understand to any degree of satisfaction the immutability of God. So we approach the study again this morning with a great sense of awe and humility. Our text declares, I am the Lord.

I change not. Throughout the centuries, the Church has expressed this truth by the use of the word immutability. And if you don't remember that word, I am not too worried.

On the other hand, if you do remember it, it is a good way to keep track of this great evidence of the fact that God is God. To be immutable is to be incapable and not susceptible to change. And that we surely need to come to grips with.

Let me repeat it. God is incapable and not susceptible to change. I am the Lord.

I change not. Now immutability is hardly a characteristic with which we have great acquaintance. The songwriters summed our problem up very well in these words.

Change and decay in all around I see. O thou who changest not, abide with me. Our entire life experience is an experience of change.

From infancy to the grave, it is change. We began life without an ability to speak. And then we became so full of words that people held their ears, that many of us will go to the grave once again with an inability to speak.

We began knowing nothing. And then we learned a great deal. And we have known the tragedy of many a dear friend who has reached the end of life and seemed to know no more than an infant whose mind was confused.

Change and decay we know by personal experience. Now we might wish that we ourselves, when our appointed hour comes, might slip into eternity with all our faculties fully functioning. But the likelihood for many of us here is that we will slip into decay to that point where others must wait upon us and feed us and change our linen and look after every detail of our life.

And like it or not, it will occur and there is nothing we can do about it. The world around us is constantly in a state of flux. The seasons indicate this.

The coloring of the trees that has just begun, and in a few days in some places in our country, will be absolutely gorgeous is another indication that man knows nothing by nature about immutability. He may have some prized possession that is rusted. He may have some great treasure that is now clean and frozen.

Maybe you one time built a lovely home and then you moved away from it and then a few years later you came back to buy that property remembering in your mind how lovely it was when you left and now you are stuck between the decay and the change that has occurred. Nations rise and fall. Society itself is ever in a state of change.

Knowledge increases and passes away. Colleges and churches and institutions of all kinds are born and know days of great glory and then they enter into decay. Our plans, our purposes, the works of our hands, everything we know is changing.

The sloth declares concerning himself, I am the Lord, I came not. At the end of each day, in the beginning, he was, I am. And now he is, I am.

And way, way into the distant future he shall be, I am. And the essence of God doesn't change. In eternity past God was spirit and today God is spirit.

And in all the tomorrows yet to come, God will be spirit. And God's nature doesn't change. Absolutely, no changes on his part.

His nature, I was about to say, does not change. God was in eternity past holy and always will be holy. God has always been benevolent and will never cease to be benevolent.

God has always been merciful. He has always been just. These qualities are as eternal as God himself.

God's abilities do not change. He's always been and he will ever be all seeing, all knowing, all understanding, all powerful. And his purposes do not change.

He purposed before the beginning of the world to save them who believe. And he has not altered one iota in this purpose. And God's thoughts do not change.

He has always thought the same way about the wicked as he thinks now. He is thinking now about the righteous just as he will think three million years from now. God is not changing his mind.

God's plans and God's determinations do not change. Not one cent. I am the Lord.

I change not. We want to face this as best we know how. And I want to ask you now to try and think with me about three particular things.

First of all, I want you to think with me about the specific scriptures in which God unfolds his immutability. Then I want you to meditate and try to come to grips with certain difficulties that these scriptures pose. And if you're already saying to yourself, well, how can it be that God doesn't change? And yet he describes himself as repenting.

And he asks us to pray. And what's the sense of praying if he doesn't change? If you're thinking that way, thank God your mind isn't here. But we want to come to grips with those difficulties that seem to contradict the immutability of God.

And then we want to take a few minutes to find some direction from this truth that we are pondering together. Now notice, if you will, please, these truths that the scriptures unfold. Number one, God is unlike men.

You'll find reference to this in the book of Numbers, chapter 23, at verse 19. God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good? God isn't like us.

We want to face that fact. You see, the idea that many have concerning God is that he is in some way like us. We're made in his image, but he isn't made in our image.

We have some small ways in which we are like him, but he has great ways in which he is unlike us. We say God doesn't. We repent, God doesn't.

We lie, God doesn't. We change our minds, God doesn't. You'll notice this, too.

Everything else is changing, but not God. Listen to these words from Psalm 102, verses 24 to 27. Thy years are throughout all generations.

Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish. The heavens, which are the works of God's hands, they shall perish, but thou shalt endure.

Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment. As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same. Thy years have no end.

And the author of Hebrews picks up this statement out of Psalm 102, and in introducing the glorious truth unfolded in the book of Hebrews about Jesus Christ, he says, Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest. They shall all wax old as a garment and as a vesture.

Shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same. And thy years, they shall not. Almost an identical statement with that of Psalm 102.

God doesn't change despite the change of everything around us, even the heavens and the earth. Or consider this truth as unfolded concerning God's counsel. His counsel endures forever.

Psalm 33, at verse 11. The counsel of the Lord standeth forever. The thoughts of his heart to all generations.

And even the Proverbs pick this up and say, in chapter 19, verse 21, There are many devices in a man's heart. Nevertheless, the counsel of the Lord shall stand. All God's thoughts and all God's purposes, we are told in Scripture, shall be fulfilled.

Isaiah 14, at verse 24. The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have saw, so it shall come to pass. And as I have purposed, so shall it stand.

And then we are told that God will fulfill all of his own pleasure. And none of his plans will fail. Isaiah 46, at verses 9 and 10.

Remember the former things of all. For I am God. There is none else.

I am God and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning and from the ancient times the things that are not yet done. Saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all my pleasure.

God declares himself as absolutely steadfast forever. Daniel 25, chapter 6, 25-27. In the words, mind you now, in the words of King Darius.

The king wrote unto all the people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you. I, Darius, make a decree that in every nation and in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble

in fear before the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and steadfast forever.

And his kingdom shall not be destroyed and his dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and he rescueth and he worketh signs and wonders in earth and in heaven who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lion. We want to see too that in Scripture there is a direct link made between the eternal nature of God and the immutability of God.

Hebrews 7, 24 and 25. Speaking of Jesus Christ. But this man continueth ever.

And because he continueth ever, he hath an unchanging preacher. And then listen to these lovely words. Wherefore he is able to say even unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

And we need to realize also that even as God the Father is described as unchanging, so is Christ the Son. Hebrews 13, 8. Words I can never forget. For I first saw them painted in a half circle around an arch in the church in which my parents were converted when I was a boy, the Christian Missionary Alliance Church of Connecticut, New York.

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever. And while I don't remember a single sermon I heard there, and I scarcely remember the face of a lone individual, I remember as if I were seeing them inscribed on the wall behind me now, Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever. And also this statement that in God there is not even the slightest variance.

If we had the time, it would be a profit to read the entire first chapter of the Epistle of James. For in that first chapter there is that lengthy discussion about the man who changes his mind and his uselessness as far as God is concerned and the plain statement that those whose minds are in a state of flux ought to come to grips with the fact that they won't receive anything from the Lord, for the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways and God has no use for him. But in the midst of all that, these sobering words in verse 17, Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and it cometh down from the Father of light, in whom there is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning.

Will you focus on that now? In whom there is no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning. There isn't even a slight hint that God is fixed. You can search all the ways of God as they can be known to men and you will not find even one wee bit of variable-ness.

God says of himself, I am the law, I change not.

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