

THE UNCHANGING GOD

"For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Malachi 3:6.

Mutability belongs to all creation; immutability belongs to God alone. The visible heavens often change their appearance; sometimes they are clear, at other times they are covered with clouds and darkness. The face of the earth appears different at the various seasons of the year. And when we consider man, the very acme of creation, his changeableness is so evident that it does not need any argument to prove it. Who has not been grieved at human fickleness? Many know what it means to be praised today and slandered tomorrow by the very same lips.

God's statement, "I am the Lord, I change not," carries an unmistakeable ring of conviction, certainty, and assurance. Here in these seven short words, which are only four in the Hebrew, we have two great statements. Each is related to the other, like two great blocks of stone each supporting the other, and so wedged together that nothing can shift them. The first bids us to begin with the existence, reality, nature, and character of God. The statement, "I am the Lord," simply assumes the existence of God. Neither the Bible nor Christ argues about the existence of God. The question, "Is there a God?", seemed to Christ an irrelevant one. Rather He was concerned with these questions, "What is God like? What may we expect of Him? What does God demand of us?" It is time that we recovered the attitude of our Saviour. Even though some puny minds have decided that God does not exist, it has not made the slightest difference in the reality of His existence.

There is an abiding significance in the title used in the text: "The Lord." It would be difficult to improve on that familiar title for God, and impossible to exhaust its meaning. That title has about it the pomp and pageantry of a king and his court, it has the ring of greatness, authority and power. God is still King, ruling in the affairs of men, overruling all that happens to each of us, and nobody can change that.

This verse also stresses the other and correlated truth of the unchangeableness of God. This theme runs through the entire Bible, and is set over against an honest recognition of the law of change in all human affairs. Many passages of scripture set before us the all-important fact of the unchangeableness of our loving God. This, of course, is in contrast with ourselves who are so changeable, so vacillating -- so changeable in purposes, plans, programs, and promises; so changeable in all of our relationships to our fellow men. Mothers and fathers change, and children change in their attitude toward their parents.

Truly we are living in the midst of changes -- changing nature and changing conditions. With God there is no change, no variableness. With God there is no shifting or veering with Him; no variation from or alteration of His eternal purposes; no mutation or change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. God is called "the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17). God cannot change for worse, for He is the eternally Holy One. He cannot change for better, for He is already the Perfect one. Time does not effect any changes with Him.

We are living in a changing world. The tides of the oceans constantly ebb and flow. The seasons come and go in rapid succession. Day with its golden sunshine follows night with its darkness. There are so many fearful and alarming changes taking place all around us today, for we are living in a world which is filled with violence. Crisis follows crisis. But at the same time, those of us who are the children of God plant our feet of faith upon the Rock which is unshakable -- the Rock of Ages, even our unchanging God. There are tensions and trials which carry us down into a dark valley, even to the breaking point. People are as restless as the surging waves of a mad sea; too noisy to hear the still

small voice of God speaking to them; too restless to surrender to Him Who is the Prince of Peace and in Whom there is rest. We are too deaf to hear that comforting invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." People are changing because they are constantly chasing thrills and yet are never satisfied. Most people know far more about the movie stars that they do about God's majestic saints. People clutter up their minds and feed their souls trashy things until they become mental morons and spiritual dwarfs. They are parrots, saying and doing what others say and do. They spend the money they don't have for things they don't need, to impress people they don't like. They are building their lives and their homes upon the sinking sands of time, only to be swept away by the storms which sweep down upon them from the horizon.

In the midst of all these conditions, we have an unchanging God and we need to hear His voice saying unto us, "I am the Lord, I change not." He remains everlastingly the same. The changelessness of God has a tremendous appeal. It explains why the hymn "Abide With Me" touches a deep chord of longing the heart and is popular with so many people.

"Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide;
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me!

Swift to the close ebbs out life's little day:
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away:
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou Who changest not, abide with me!

I need thy presence every passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me!

Hold Thou Thy word before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies:
Heavens morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee--
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!"

-- H. F. Lyte (1847)

Our God is unchanging in His: --

I. Person.

God is living, intelligent, and all-powerful. He has stamped this fact indelibly upon the pages of our minds. He has thundered this fact into the depths of our souls. The great and gracious God is sovereign in all of His acts, supreme in all of His majesty, and sacrificial toward those who need Him. Mortal tongue cannot describe His person. He is far beyond any pattern we may have set within our own minds. We may think of His brightness and beauty, His greatness and grace, His goodness and generosity. We think of His purity and power, His eternal splendors, His mighty sacrifices in behalf of a ruined race. And yet, we cannot adequately describe God. Of course, God has revealed Himself in the star-studded night, in the beauties of the flowers adorning a landscape, and in all created things with their marvelous design and adaptability. But, more especially, God has revealed Himself in the life, and the ministry, and the death of His dear Son.

Our Saviour came into this world that we might understand what God is like. What God

was in the beginning, He shall ever be -- unchanging in His person. What God was to his ancient people -- protecting them every step of the way, and providing for their every need--He is to His people today. This God Who was, Who is, and Who will ever be is unchanging, all-powerful, and eternal.

II. Patience.

We wonder why God has been so patient with us. Oh, the patience of the Almighty! He is so longsuffering. This is the reason for the comforting sentence in our text: "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Yes, God was patient and longsuffering with Jacob the trickster and double-dealing person. God was patient and longsuffering with His people in the Old Testament era and in the New Testament period. The Israelites repeatedly turned to idolatry. They rebelled against God. Yet, lovingly and graciously, God ministered unto them until He had fulfilled His purpose in bringing His Son into the world through their nation. While it is true that God will have patience with us, He will not indulge us nor bless in our sins.

III. Passion.

Nothing in the Bible is any more tender and gracious than the passion which is expressed in the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 17. There we read that, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved me, as thou hast loved me" (John 17:20-23). What a wonderful statement! Our Lord is saying that the Father loves us as He loved His own dear the obedient Son, thus proving that God is unchanging in His passion.

The supreme passion of God is for the salvation of lost sinners. We "is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." How amazing! It was His eternal passion that sent forth the Son to die for us. It was this same loving passion that brought us into His family and reconciled us to God.

When man first sinner, it was God Who took the initiative and provided the substitute, and the sacrifice, and the blood, and the garments that those rebels might be reconciled unto Him again. And thus it has been throughout all the ages and is today. God provided the supreme substitute, the all-sufficient sacrifice, the redeeming blood, and the robe of righteousness. Each of us has seen great human love manifested, but none can ever compare with the love of our heavenly Father for us.

IV. Preparation.

The Lord did not create the stars to shine until first He had prepared the skies for them to rest in and to shine like diamonds in the floor of the heavens. God did not create the trees, the shrubs, the flowers until first He had prepared the land in which they would grow. God did not create the fishes until first He had prepared the waters for them. He did not create the birds above our heads until the firmaments were created. He did not call into existence the animals that roam the fields and forests until He had made preparation for them and caused the grass to grow, upon which they could feed. But, greatest of all, He did not create man until first he had prepared a garden of infinite beauty. Then He created man and woman and placed them in that garden.

Now our unchanging Lord is preparing another paradise, the heavenly home for His saints. Christ said, "I go to prepare a place for you." He is busy making ready that home for His redeemed. How beautiful it must be! There is nothing in this world to compare with it. It is far beyond anything we can imagine. He is making the preparation, and one day He will lead His redeemed into the place that He has prepared for them -- a place where sin, sickness, suffering, and sorrow cannot enter. Trust Christ as your personal Saviour and He will save you, and then you will be prepared to enter that wonderful home that the Lord is preparing for you.

How grateful we should be to and for our unchanging God! What He did, He is doing; and what He is doing, He will do again when the need arises. Every need of every soul is only meant to be a fresh occasion for proving that there is a fresh and adequate blessing from the Lord. He brings to us the very blessings that we need and that we shall need in the future. His supply of blessings can never be exhausted. He is the same today that He was yesterday, and He will be the same tomorrow. God said, "I am the Lord, I change not."