

God is Unchangeable

Adoring God Chapter 9

Malachi 3:6

I. The Text Opened

A. Malachi 3:6

1. "For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." (Mal. 3:6).
 - a) Men are continually in a state of change.
 - (1) *Their experiences, thoughts, and feelings have changed who they are.*
 - (2) *They grow in wisdom, but, unfortunately, they can also become more foolish.*
 - (3) *They have learned things that they once did not know, and they have forgotten things they once knew.*
 - (4) *Their perspectives and philosophies on life can change over time. Their physical bodies change, from the dependency of infancy to the strength and stamina of young adulthood, and eventually to the weariness of old age.*
 - (a) *Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher in the 6th century BC, wrote: "Change is the only constant in life."*
 - (b) *And from a mere human point of view, he's right.*
 - (c) *However, men can raise our hearts in grateful praise that their God never changes!*
2. God's unchanging nature.
 - a) God's unchanging nature is His immutability.
 - b) This attribute distinguishes Him from all of His creatures.
 - c) He is eternally, "the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change," (James 1:17, ESV).
 - d) All that He is today, He has always been, and will always be.
 - (1) *He cannot change for the worse, or He would no longer be God.*
 - (2) *Nor can He change for the better, for He is already infinitely perfect.*
 - e) Men as creatures, on the other hand, are constantly changing.
 - (1) *Everything and everyone in creation is, by nature, subject to continual change.*
 - (2) *People, great men, and even angels are changeable.*
 - (3) *The world is changeable (Ps. 102:26).*
 - (4) *The saints in heaven will change for their good (Rev. 21:4).*
 - (5) *Wicked men in hell are changeable to become more evil (Matt. 25:30).*
 - (a) *But God is constant. "I the Lord do not change," (Mal. 3:6).*
3. God is entirely uninfluenced by the passage of time, so He does not age.
 - a) He cannot be changed by anything from outside Himself, and He will not change from any principle within Himself.
 - b) Since each and every attribute of God is infinitely perfect, they will always be the same.
 - (1) *His glory will never fade.*
 - c) In this way, the contrast between being and becoming marks a major difference between the Creator and the creature.
 - (1) *Every creature is continually changing in their age, growth and knowledge, but any change is foreign to God.*
 - d) God certainly feels, but these active principles should not be viewed as emotions, in the same sense that we experience changes in our feelings.

(1) God's nature, on the other hand, is an inexpressible, fixed, peaceful unchanging calm.

II. The Doctrine from the Text

A. Doctrine: God is unchangeable in his nature and will.

1. God is unchangeable in His being and essence, His blessedness and glory, His counsels and decrees, His kingdom and rule, His covenants and promises, and in His love and grace towards His people.

a) He is the eternal constant.

2. Not only is God's character unchangeable, His will never changes.

a) He never changes His mind.

b) God is perfect, and His plan for creation is perfect since it proceeded from Him in eternity past.

c) Therefore, His plan will not change.

(1) God does not change His mind from what He perfectly set in place in His eternally decreed will.

d) There are some passages that seem, in a few instances, indicating God changing His mind, or regretting something He did.

(1) "And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, the LORD repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed the people, It is enough: stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD was by the threshingplace of Araunah the Jebusite." (2Sa. 24:16).

e) The Bible seems to indicate that God repents, He changes His plans, He becomes angry, He has one attitude toward the godly and another toward the wicked.

(1) And consider, in the fullness of time God came to earth in a human nature, and took on the role of Christ, a servant, to save His people from their sins, even dying on a cross.

(2) How do we reconcile these apparent biblical contradictions with the truth of God's immutability?

(a) When speaking of Himself to fallen humanity in Scripture, God adapts His language to man's limited understanding.

(b) In other words, He describes Himself as having physical characteristics and features, like eyes, ears, hands, and so on.

(c) He speaks of Himself as "waking" and "rising early," even though He never slumbers nor sleeps.

(d) And He describes Himself as getting angry, being joyful, jealous, etc., though His feelings do not fluctuate.

(3) When God alters His way of dealing with men, He describes this change of conduct as "repenting."

(a) But all of these are and always were part of God's original will and design.

(b) Whenever God issues a promise or a threat which He does not carry out, this merely indicates that there was a contingency, either expressly stated or implied, which would determine whether or not the circumstances would take place.

(i) This fact was already known to God because He is all-knowing.

(c) He has not changed.

(d) He does not change.

(e) He will not change.

(f) And this includes His perfect and glorious will for everything.

(i) *God is not a man, that He should lie; or a son of man, that He should change His mind. (Num. 23:19, ESV)*

3. Was the incarnation a change in God?
 - a) When the Son of God took on a human nature, was there a change in His deity?
 - b) No. Christ's human nature was joined with God's divine nature in a special union without changing the divine nature in any way.
 - c) This special union of the divine and human natures in the Son had no effect on the composition of the Trinity whatsoever.
 - d) God remains one God in three persons.
 - (1) *The addition of a human nature to the Second person of the Trinity is not the addition of another person to Him.*
 - e) Consider God's infinite Spirit dwelling in a finite believer.
 - (1) *Christians have the Holy Spirit in them, but God is infinite.*
 - (2) *There is, however, a spiritual connection, a divine beam of glory that shines into their soul.*
 - (3) *Changes occur to them, but never to God in this union.*
 - (4) *Christ's human nature was animated by the divine person of the Son, but the human nature at no time changed as a result of that union.*
 - (a) *If the divine nature had been converted into the human, or the human into the divine, there would have been a change, but this never happened.*
 - (b) *The human nature was distinct from the divine.*
- (i)** *Therefore, there was no change.*
4. A changing God would be devastating to the Biblical record.
 - a) Consider how man's relationship with God might look if He were as capricious as men are.
 - b) Men change their minds on a whim, become swayed by a compelling argument, act foolishly, process truth and wisdom from self-centeredness, and sometimes become distracted or bored – just to name a few of their troubling traits.
 - c) If God were subject to such change, men might pray in an attempt to argue Him out of what He wants to do.
 - (1) *They might wonder if He forgot them or was not aware of their present troubles.*
 - (2) *They would work to stay on His good side while being afraid, He would choose to walk away and abandon them. Stephen Charnock stated so well, What comfort would it be to pray to a god that, like the chameleon, changed color every moment? Who would put up a petition to an earthly prince that was so mutable as to grant a petition one day, and deny it another?*
 5. For Christians, the gracious Lord will never leave them nor forsake them because of His unchanging promise to keep them near to His heart for all eternity.
 - a) And the Scriptures, God's immutable Word, undergird this loving relationship!

(1) *Men must think if it this way, “God loves me, and He loves me unchangeably. My friends change, outward comforts change, I even change myself. God’s love for me, though, never changes. I am forever on His heart. Evil men and devils, or excessive sorrow cannot ever cast me out of God’s love for me. He sometimes afflicts me, but yet He loves me. He sometimes frowns on me, but yet He loves me. He sometimes seems to slay me, but yet He loves me. He may give me some wretched illness to deal with in faith, but yet He loves me. I sin against Him, depart from Him in my wayward thoughts or actions, and yet, notwithstanding, He loves me. His love cannot be broken off from me, and after a while, when this earthly life is finished, I will bathe in His love forever. He loves me unchangeably in Jesus Christ. He will pardon me, change me, sanctify me, make me holy, bring me to heaven, place me near His heart and love me forever in holiness.”*

b) God’s love for His own is unchanging.

(1) *Such love will never be withdrawn nor diminish from its infinite depth.*

(2) *His promises are unchanging; redeemed men can, therefore, rely on them in faith.*

(a) *For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but My steadfast love shall not depart from you, and My covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the LORD, who has compassion on you. (Isa. 54:10, ESV)*

6. God never changes for Unrepentant Sinners

a) What is a comfort for the Christian should conversely be terror for unbelievers.

b) People who defy God, break His laws, and have no concern for His glory – and still plan to go to heaven because they were ‘good people’ – grossly misrepresent the Holy Scriptures.

(1) *They live as though God did not exist; then they expect entrance to heaven because of their good works or passive intentions.*

c) But Scripture is clear.

(1) *Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. God’s Word is not subject to change.*

(2) *His Word is living and active and unchanging.*

(a) *It blesses, and it condemns.*

(3) *God has declared, “Therefore I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them,” (Ezek. 8:18, ESV).*

d) God will not – He cannot – deny or contradict Himself to gratify the lusts and rebellion of those with whom He has no relationship through Jesus Christ.

(1) *God is holy, and unchangingly so.*

(2) *God hates sin, eternally hates it.*

(3) *This, then, is the cause for eternal punishment of all who die in their sins.*

III. The Text Applied

A. Our Adoration of God

1. To adore God’s immutable nature (Isa. 41:4-5), let us turn our mind and heart to contemplate our Lord’s unchanging beauty. Celebrate the greatness of God! (Ps. 90:2).

a) These are those ‘high thoughts of God’ that we should meditate on and ponder.

b) It is because He is unchangeable that we are not consumed.

c) It is because He is unchangeable that we who are His true followers will live forever.

d) It is because He is unchangeable that we will be perfect one day in heaven.

- e) It is because He is unchangeable that we are eternally justified by Christ's blood.
- f) And it is because He is unchangeable that we are eternally pardoned!
 - (1) *Meditating on His unchangeable nature provides enormous guidance for us as we follow Christ and continue to be conformed into His image. Amen.*