

## **“GOD: SOME THINGS JUST NEVER CHANGE.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA**

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**Text for the Sermon: Numbers 23:19; Psalm 102:25-28; James 1:17**

### **Introduction.**

I have here our church directory from about 1985. Wow, I mean wow, have you all ever changed. You have change hair style and color and amount, look at the size of those glasses and all those mustaches, and the change in the number and sizes of these kids.

We live in a world filled with change. Just look at a 50 year old map of Africa. It seems like everything is changing, that nothing is fixed and stable anymore. Even what we thought were absolutes, seem relative now, old truths are giving way to new opinions.

I often reflect with our 80 plus year old members that they have seen more change in their lifetime than any other generation that has ever lived and maybe more than any generation to come. There are several among us who remember horse and buggy and no electricity and no phones and no indoor plumbing. And now we are taking pictures of Pluto and pictures of ourselves with phones that have more computer capabilities than NASA had when they launched John Glenn into space in 1962.

But actually it has always been like this in our world. Change is an inescapable part of our world, birth, growth, death, rising and falling, coming and going, the endless cycle of seasons. We talk about climate change like it's a new thing, when that's what climate has always done, change. Change is the one constant.

In our summer series on the attributes of God we come this week to God's *unchangeableness*. Again this morning we will seek to get a better understanding of the mysteries of our infinitely holy God and we will conclude with how this matters to us today, what difference it makes in our daily lives and daily struggles.

Are you eager to learn all you can about the God with whom you will be spending eternity?

Wayne Grudem: God is unchangeable in His being (essence), nature (perfections), and in His purposes and promises. But God does act and feel emotions, and He acts and feels differently in response to different situations.

### **God's Immutable Character.**

God is unchangeable (immutable), without variation in His being (essence), nature and perfections.

In Psalm 102 God's character and nature are contrasted with the heavens and the earth. We tend to think of the heavens and the earth as fixed and permanent, but in reality God existed before the heavens and the earth and He will exist long after the heavens and the earth pass away.

God made them to exist, He sustains them and uses them according to His unchangeable will and He will make them to cease to exist.

As the hymn writer says:

We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree, And wither and perish, but naught changeth thee.

James reminds us all good gifts have always come from God who is without variation. In Scripture God is often called the Rock and for good reason, He is solid, fixed, firm, without change.

God is not like us. We are becoming, growing, changing, maturing, being sanctified, striving to be better, pressing on as Paul. God is never becoming. God is never growing or developing. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He can't become stronger or weaker, wiser or more truthful, more merciful or less loving.

For a moral being to change means either He must go from worse to better or better to worse. God can't change for the better since He is perfect, and since He is perfect He can't change for the worse. Any change in God would imply some kind of incompleteness before.

God is unique in this. This is one of the attributes that sets God apart from everything in creation. Nothing else in all creation can claim to be unchangeable. There is nothing in God that can be altered, nothing that can be added or taken away.

All that God is now, He has always been. And all that God is now is all that He will ever be.

### **God's Trustworthy Character.**

God is unchangeable in His purposes and promises. The purposes and promises and counsel of God are as unchangeable as He is.

**Psalm 33:11** The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.

**Isaiah 46:9-11** I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me,  
10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done,  
saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'  
11 ... I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass; I have purposed, and I will do it.

Once God has made a promise it is as good as done, He cannot be unfaithful or untrustworthy. He doesn't go back on His Word.

The only reason God would have to change some purpose or promise was if He either lacked some knowledge about the future or didn't have the power to accomplish it. But since God has

perfect knowledge of all things and since He has complete and perfect power, there is never any need for Him to change or reverse course. He never has any error or mistake in judgment.

**What about .... ?**

*Does God ever change His mind?*

We are familiar with places in Scripture where God says He is going to do something and then because of someone's prayer or other action He relents or changes His course of action.

God threatened to destroy Israel for the Golden Calf incident but Moses' prayer stopped God from doing that. God sent Jonah to Nineveh to announce that Nineveh was about to be destroyed, but He didn't do it when Nineveh repented.

The simplest way to answer this is to say, God responds differently to different situations.

**Jonah 3:10** When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

If the situation had stayed the same, God would have sent judgment. But the situation changed.

We are the ones who change, God doesn't change. There is no change in God's being, but there is change in those around Him and in His relationship to them.

The sun can melt wax and harden clay. Does the sun change? No, the difference is in the substance, in the objects.

These texts that refer to a reversal of God's previously announced treatment are based on their change of heart. It is never implied that God was surprised or caught off guard, and that it was not part of His eternal plan.

God punishes the wicked and blesses and forgives the righteous and the repentant. This is according to His character and revealed purpose.

What about when God said that He was sorry He had created mankind or He was sorry He made Saul king over Israel? Does this mean God didn't see the bad things coming? Is this suggesting that if God could do it all over again He would change the way He did it? No. If God could do it all over again, He would do it exactly the same.

Those statements are expressions of God's displeasure over the immediate situation, over the sinfulness of man. God really is displeased. The short term events are great cause for God's displeasure, but the long term purposes and plans will achieve God's good purposes.

God can feel sorrow over Saul and his actions without meaning that He didn't see it coming. God does not repent like men, He is not sorry like men. God's repentance is not due to lack of knowledge or lack of foreknowledge.

Can you parents think of a time when you allowed your child to do something you knew would bring sorrow or pain or heartache, but you let them because you could see a greater good coming from the experience and the lessons learned?

God is a heavenly Father and He purposefully lets His children do things and even sin in big ways because He sees a far greater good coming, He has a far greater purpose in mind.

Let that truth and reality sink in for a minute. God being God can see far ahead and He has far greater plans and purposes. He not just allows but purposes for our pain and our heartache and our sin to achieve ultimately God glorifying purposes that will also benefit us and those around us in ways we could never even imagine.

### **Practical Implications and Applications.**

Is this just an abstract truth? Is this just some remote and irrelevant doctrine? Sure, we are glad to know God is consistent and constant but so what?

Is this just a discussion for theologians and philosophers and people who are really into this sort of stuff? How does it help the common man, the practical man?

#### ***Trust:***

Who can you trust to day? Politicians and famous preachers have broken trust, people are trying to scam us, others make promises and don't deliver.

There is only one being you can trust without any reservation or holding back. You can trust God, you can put your life in His hands, you can put your fears, hurts, and disappointments in His hands.

Consider the example of Abraham and his trust in God. When God called Abraham to follow Him he obeyed.

**Hebrews 11:8** By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

Would you follow God even if you had no idea where you would end up? For some of you the future is a blank slate, you have absolutely no clue what's ahead. Would you trust God enough to follow Him without knowing, and trust Him completely with your future?

Again consider the example of Abraham and his trust in God regarding his only son.

**Genesis 22:1-3** God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac. And he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

**Genesis 22:10-12** Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. 11 But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 12 He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

That's trust in a trustworthy God. That's confidence the commands and promises of God are unchangeably good.

God is dependable. Don't let the lies of Satan or the changes in circumstances convince you otherwise. God is faithful and trustworthy and will always do what's right and best for you.

God is as full of love toward us today as He was the day He sent His Son to the cross to die for us. God can be relied on when everything else in your life is unreliable. He is the rock in the stormy seas of life.

**Isaiah 54:10** 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.

### ***Trust the Word of God:***

As God is reliable so God's Word is reliable.

But God's Word was written two to three thousand years ago. It was given to people who were pretty simple by our standards. They were almost primitive, with no machines or technology. They practiced idolatry, they followed heresies we have never heard of. They were an ancient and far away people.

There is an unfathomable world of difference between Abraham herding a flock of sheep across Iraq and this nuclear, computer, space age of ours.

How can God's Word to a far away and seemingly backward people be any use to us in our day with all our technological advances? How can there be a link between their time and culture and ours? The link is God Himself. The God who spoke to them is exactly the same God who speaks to us.

God's Word is not subject to revision or editing. It can't be recalled or put up to a majority vote of the Supreme Court. God has not changed His thinking over the past couple of thousand years. God's Word is never out of date or old fashioned or irrelevant. God's Word is true in all ages and among all peoples in all places.

Do you want to stand before God and put your opinion up against His Word? Do you want to say to God that you were on the right side of history but on the wrong side of His Word?

In the shifting sands of time and culture, the Word of God is a rock, our anchor and our hope. If you are on the side of the Bible then you are on the right side of eternity.

### ***Prayer:***

Is it a comfort to you to know that each time to you turn to God in prayer, each time you come with a need, each time you come to confess another sin, the God you encounter in prayer is always the same?

He isn't one time happy, another time angry, this time calm, next time a volcano. We never have to wonder if God will be in a good mood or not, whether He will feel like listening to us this time. There aren't times when He is busy, or off the clock, or disinterested.

Some say there's no point in approaching God in praying, God has made up His mind. But we know that God wants us to pray because He delights to answer prayer and give good gifts to His

children. God is not a cold fish, lacking compassion. God is not impassive or unapproachable or unentreatable.

He won't always do what we ask him because He is perfect and wise and good and will only do what is absolutely best for us.

Remember God didn't change when David prayed his son would not die and God didn't change when Paul prayed for the thorn in this flesh to be removed. When God doesn't change, it is always good, always for a better blessing.

***Imitate God:***

God is a good father to his children, always hears, works through our lives and prayers.

Some people in general and some men in particular and I am thinking of husbands and fathers, think leadership is not changing their mind. Some think they are being God-like because they are always right and never open to appeal.

If you are like that, if refuse to listen and hear what others have to say and change your mind, you bear no resemblance to God. Do not refuse to listen to the pleas of your wife or children. Don't be stubborn and think you are being righteous.

Wise and godly men and leaders are open to those around them and seek to live with them in an understanding way. They seek counsel and listen, they are compassionate and considerate of the thoughts and feelings of others.

***Submit to the unchanging God so He will change you:***

While God does not change, we as sinners must change if we are going to enter into heaven. The only people in heaven are repentant sinners. And the word repent means to change, to change directions, to change from living for ourselves to living for Jesus. The change that is required is to acknowledge our sins and to trust in Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and to ask Him to give us His Holy Spirit to change us from the inside out.

For us change is a gift, it means redemption is possible, we can change from being a child of Satan to a child of God, we can change from darkness to light, we can change from pride to humility, from lust to purity, from hate to love, from fear to peace.

**II Corinthians 3:18** We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

**I Corinthians 15:51-52** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.