

Malachi 3:6 (William (Bill) Prost) 139898

Change: July 2017, I Am the Lord; I Change Not (3:6)

We live in a changing world. We have to cope with the political, economic, technological and social changes in this world, and what is more difficult, we sometimes have to deal with changes in people. Those whom we loved and appreciated may be taken from us, while those whom we trusted may even turn against us. In view of all this, how refreshing and comforting it is to consider that we have been taken into favor by One who does not change!

First of all, we must remind ourselves that God Himself does not change. We are reminded of this in the title of this article, taken from Malachi 3:6: "I am the Lord, I change not." In spite of all Israel's sin and departure from Him, He had not changed, either in His love or His judgments. This gives us comfort in temporal things too, for it is by our Lord Jesus Christ that "all things subsist" (Col. 1:17 JND). God has promised that "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22). All the factors that influence global warming cannot affect this promise!

Also, God's moral principles and standards do not change, even from one dispensation to another. His absolutes of right and wrong remain the same, and thus His view of sin does not change with public opinion or changing times.

Likewise, God's promises do not change, for "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). Man makes promises and does not, or perhaps cannot, carry them out. But God will never be frustrated in any of His promises, and we may count on this. Another has aptly put it, "God's promises are precepts to Himself, binding on Him, and as they are His promises to us, they show us what He is in Himself."

God's love and grace do not change. How many times in this world do we find natural love waning with time, and a love that once seemed to burn with fervor becoming not only cold, but even turning to hatred! How different the love of God! At the end of Israel's history, when they were about to be carried away into captivity because of their sin, we read of the Lord saying, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). Likewise with the church, when it has so seriously failed in its testimony, we read, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Rev. 3:19). His present word to us is, "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love" (John 15:9). God's ways with us may change, for we are often in need of correction and discipline, but His love never changes. Even if we have failed, if we approach God, we have always to do with love.

Finally, we must remember that God's Word does not change. The psalmist reminds us, "Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89), while Peter tells us that "the word of the Lord endureth forever" (1 Peter 1:25). Man has attacked God's Word for thousands of years; he has often changed it and tried to corrupt it. Yet it remains the same and is unfailingly true. We as believers can rest on it, as that which is stable in a changing world. It is the only book in the world that gives us light amid all the moral darkness here, comfort in every kind of sorrow, and, above all, the revelation of God Himself in Christ.

But while we enjoy those things that do not change, we must remember that change is sometimes of God and necessary for us. There are perhaps three areas where the Word of God depicts change as a good thing.

First of all, the Lord Himself, in carrying out His purposes, reserves to Himself the right to deal with man in different ways in different dispensations. Thus, for example, He put Israel under law as a test, to see if there was any good in the natural man. But then, when man failed every test God could give him, He sent His Son to die for them, to bring them out of the bondage of the law and into the liberty of grace. While man loved the liberty of grace in one sense, yet the Jews resisted this change and clung to that which they had known for 1500 years. It was upsetting to have to relinquish that which they had practiced for so long, and especially as Christianity took away that which appealed to the senses of the natural man.

To this day man resists this change and has introduced much of Judaism into Christianity. Impressive buildings, beautiful music, a ritualistic form of service, and a priestly class of people who come between man and God are all remnants of that which God has taken away, in order to introduce worship "in spirit and in truth." But the change from Judaism to Christianity is of God, and not only is according to His Word, but is for God's glory and our blessing.

Second, the Lord expects change in us. We read in 2 Corinthians 3:18 (JND), "We all, looking on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit." To be transformed is to be changed, for while we will be perfectly like Christ when He comes for us, God is beginning that work down here. As we go on in our Christian pathway, God expects that in "looking on the glory of the Lord" we will become more like Him. Sometimes this change is difficult for us, as we often like ourselves too much. We may want to be more like Christ, but the process is often painful, and our natural heart rebels against it. Yet it can be accomplished by the simple process of looking on the glory of the Lord. His glory eclipses all else, and often unconsciously, we become more like the One on whom we look.

Finally, there is the need to recognize change in ourselves and in this world and to adjust to it. We read in Acts 13:36 that "David ... served his own generation by the will of God." To a large extent, we are all products of the era in which we grew up, and as we get older, it becomes harder to cope with a different world. Added to the changes in this world are the weaknesses and infirmities of old age, when not only our bodies but also our minds are not as malleable as they once were. As an illustration of this, we remember that as a young man David slew Goliath, setting an example of faith in the Lord. He went on to win many other victories, and his courage was an inspiration to others to follow

him. Yet later in his life, we read that in a certain battle, “David was exhausted. And Ishbibenob ... girded with new armor, thought to smite David. And Abishai the son of Zeruiah succored him, and smote the Philistine and killed him” (2 Sam. 21:15-17 JND). The one who had killed Goliath was now an older man, and the strenuous activity of battle exhausted him. He was unable to cope with a younger generation of giants, and a younger man, Abishai, had to come to his rescue.

So it may be with us today. As we get older, we find that Satan has “new armor,” perhaps a picture of new devices and new technology — entities with which we may not be able to cope. Does this mean that our service for the Lord is ended? By no means. But it may mean that we must leave some of the battles to younger ones who are more equipped to handle the new attacks of Satan.

Also, this incident should serve as an encouragement and an exercise to younger ones to be ready to come forward and to take the place of older ones who find it difficult to keep up with all the changes in this world. While it may have been humbling for David, no doubt he was thankful that Abishai was there to help him. Also, it is important to notice that David was not “sidelined” from active part in the Lord’s service, nor did Abishai demean David or slight him in any way. Those who suggested that he not go out to battle anymore still called him, “The light of Israel,” and gave him the respect due to him as God’s rightful king. But they recognized, and he too had to recognize, the changes that had taken place.

In our day of rapid change, we who are older need wisdom from the Lord to know when to relinquish some responsibility to younger ones, and especially when we feel that our mental and physical strength is not what it used to be. Likewise, younger ones need to be exercised about taking that place and having the spiritual energy and strength (as did Abishai) to come to the aid of those who are older.

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