

## Podcast 264 God Doesn't Change

I just finished 41 studies on God's attributes, which are going into the book "Come Into His Presence." It's a wonderful exercise to meditate and think about God's nature and character. The most recent one is "God is Faithful."

It's a wonderful job I have right now to fill up my mind thinking about God and what He's like, and the character qualities that He possesses. One of the most comforting topics that we're going to talk about today, is that He never changes. The world changes, our body's change, our circumstances change, the church changes as well as the world and everything around us.

Amidst all that change, the only constant is that God never changes. In the song "Great is Thy Faithfulness," there is a special phrase, "There is no shadow of turning with Thee. Thou changest not Thy compassions, they fail not, as Thou hast been Thou forever will be."

Those words resonate with my heart. "There's no shadow of turning with Thee. You change not Your compassions. They fail not as You have been, You forever will be." This writer of that hymn got it just right. Let's pray that God will help us to see what the writer of that hymn saw that God never changes.

"Father, thank You for being a Rock in the midst of a swirling storm, and lots of currents and lots of changes. Yet You remain steadfast. You are eternal. You're the great I am. Help us to get a grasp of that. Help us to anchor our souls to this truth today. Help me as I teach. Give us all ears to hear what You have for us along this line today. Let us assimilate it. In Jesus' name, Amen.

First of all, God introduced Himself to Moses in Exodus 3 as He said "I am who I am," which is a great sentence. We could probably spend half of eternity meditating on the fact that God is. He's not evolving. He is not changing. He is.

He's not slowing down and deteriorating. He's not improving. He is the perfect God who does not have to change, who simply is "I am who I am." He reminds us in the last book of the Old Testament, in the book of Malachi, "I, the Lord, do not change."

Many people have said that in the Old Testament, we have a God of vengeance. In the New Testament, we have the loving Jesus. You and I know -- because we have read

the whole book many, many times, God does not change. He's the God of grace from the Book of Genesis to the Book of Revelation. He doesn't change.

Jesus tapped into that, when He said in John 8:58, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." That comment caused all kinds of consternation. The people who watched Him grow up said to themselves, You're a young man from Nazareth, we know your mom and your dad. However You just said, 'Now, before Abraham was, I am'." He chose to use that Greek expression "ego eime, which we've talked about in the previous podcast which means "I am," and which identified him with God in Exodus 3, "I am who I am."

The writer of Hebrews affirms this truth in 13:8, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever." The same thought is expressed in Revelation, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Each of these verses are in God's word which is living and active. I don't have to expound upon them. These are facts of the case.

Paul writes through the spirit's inspiration in Colossians 1:15–17 speaking of Jesus. "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, for by Him, all things were created. In heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things were created through Him, and for Him, and He is before all things, and in Him, all things hold together." Whenever I want to meditate on Christ, I generally choose Colossians.

Then, there's special passage in James 1:17, which is the inspiration for the first verse in the hymn, "Great is Thy faithfulness." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shadow due to change." No shadow, no variation, no changing. He's the Father of lights.

Scott, I'm going to give you a second here. Tell me some of your favorite portions of scripture that you look forward to hearing, listening to, or reading, because I know you use the audio Bible. In the Old Testament, where are some favorite passages that you know when you're coming up to them, you're thinking, "Oh, good, I like this part"?

Scott: Psalm 23 is an easy favorite and I feel like I'm copping out by saying that, but I do love that one. There are a bunch of other psalms. Anything that talks about His steadfast love endures forever.

Steve: The Psalms, wonderful. One of my sections will surprise you. That's probably why I asked you that question just to get everybody thinking this who is listening. What are some of the favorite passages that you look forward to reading? I look forward to reading Isaiah chapters 40 through 49. There is powerful stuff in there. I'm going to read four passages.

This is Isaiah, who saw the Lord high and lifted up. He had a vision of God. In Isaiah 6, He saw God. I think of that when I read these things, because he wasn't writing something that he hoped for. These were truths He had experienced. Isaiah 41:10, "Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

"'You are My witnesses,' declares the LORD, 'and My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me and understand that I am He. Before Me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after Me.'" (Isaiah 43:10)

It's if God is clearing the air of all the false trues that are swirling about and He just declares, "Hey, I'm your Dad, I'm your God, I will uphold you. Look around. There's no God before me, there's no God coming after me, I am He."

Then, in Isaiah 44:6 He says, "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and His Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last; besides Me there is no god.'"

"I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 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.'" (Isaiah 46:9-10) It's a rare glimpse into a powerful God that we love and whose team we are a part of.

Yes, He came in the form of a baby. He humbled Himself and He left His throne but every once in a while, He just shucks off the bathrobe so to speak, and declares, "Hey, don't forget, I am. I am the first, I am the last and there is no other God beside me.

The psalmist saw this in Psalm 102, "Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain; they

will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but You are the same, and Your years have no end." (Psalm 102:25-27)

It's hard to grasp the concept of eternity and yet as I read these words, it makes me think, "If God is eternal, and God is unchangeable, then so is His Word." Psalm 33:11 says, "The Counsel of the Lord stands forever. The plans of His heart to all generations." "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away," Matthew 24 is very much in sync with the passages we have read.

"Forever, Oh Lord, your word is firmly fixed in the heavens," Psalm 119. Then 1 Peter 1, which is quoting Isaiah, "You've been born again, not a perishable seed but imperishable, through the living and abiding Word of God for all flesh is like grass, in all its glory, like the flower of grass. The grass withers, the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever."

We have God's word, and we have God's promises, and we have God's declarations, we can count on them, because not one word He has spoken will ever be broken. God declares the He is the Alpha and the Omega. His word is fixed in the heavens. Everything around us is going to fade and be burned up. However, God remains the same.

Whew, I feel like I'm preaching here. I'm preaching to myself as much as anybody. It's nice to hold on to this.

Perhaps you know this song written by A.B. Simpson, who was the founder of the Christian Missionary Alliance. It's one of my favorite songs. I don't know that I'm going to sing it, but I'll at least read the first verse and the refrain.

"Oh, how sweet the glorious message, simple faith may claim. Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same. Still, He loves to save the sinful, heal the sick and lame, cheer the mourner, still the tempest glory to His name."

Then the chorus, "Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same. All may change, but Jesus never, glory to His name. Glory to His name, glory to His name. All may change, but Jesus never, glory to His name."

Scott: Hallelujah.

Steve: Have you sung that song?

Scott: Probably at some point. We haven't done regular hymns in a long time.

Steve: They're my meat and drink. I like to find a good hymn to start each day, and I like that one. I'll sing the chorus for you.

[Steve sings] "Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same. All may change but Jesus never, glory to His name. Glory to His name. Glory to His name. All may change, but Jesus never. Glory to His name."

Sometimes, I sing out loud in my home if no one else is there, or in the car. When I do, that refrain continues to go over and over in my spirit, in my mind, and I find myself singing that throughout the day. This is going to be my takeaway for the day, holding on to this truth. All may change, but Jesus never.

Scott: I grew up in a church where they sang hymns and then got away from churches where they do hymns. I never got into the practice of singing them. Most of them I remember at one point having sung them, but I never memorized that many of them.

Steve: Elisabeth Elliot said...I heard her tell me this...that it was phrases from hymns that got her through the darkest days of her life. I found this quote of hers recently, "Hymns will get you through the night."

Scott: If they ever start locking us all up for our faith, you're going to be the one that everybody that's in the jail with you is going to be looking to, to lead them in worship with all the hymns that you know.

Steve: OK, let's pray. Father, thank You for songs and for truths. Thank You that here we are, finite beings and You have opened our eyes and we see You. We see You as our Savior and as our Lord, and that's nothing but the work of God. For that, we thank You. We do bring glory to Your name. We do affirm Your unchangeableness that all around us, everything's going to change, but You remain the same. You are the one constant, with a capital C, and we worship You and pray that You'll help each of us to get this rocky truth right down deep in our heart, so when the storms do come, we'll be hitched to a rock that can't change. In Jesus' name, Amen.