

God Changes His Mind

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Does God change His mind?
 - 1. Mal. 3:6; 1Sam. 15:29; James 1:17
 - 2. We must keep these things in context
 - 3. We must remember that if God predestines all things, He violates His gift of free will to man
- B. God does not change his mind as a man does
 - 1. Man's life is governed by the irreversible march of time
 - 2. God, who foresees all things, has already changed His mind in the past in response to the changing exigencies of human fickle choices.
 - 3. The difference is that God is not ignorant of the choices and behaviors that you will do tomorrow. He knows what it will be and He knows how He will respond.
 - 4. And He knows that His response to your future behavior will be different from His response to your present behavior if your behavior changes. And so His "change of mind" is not based on ignorance. It is foreknown and planned - unlike man's.
- C. God does not think as a man thinks - Isa. 55:8-9
 - 1. One is that God responds to differing situations and behaviors in differing ways: He rejoices over some behaviors and disapproves of others. He severely chastises some behaviors and mercifully passes over others. God is not a flat personality with no emotions.
 - 2. The other is that God's responses are not like man's. They are never based on ignorance of what humans do. He foresees our changes and knows the perfect, wise, and righteous response to each change. In other words, God's variations, as we experience them, are part of a unified and unchanging plan to accomplish His great purposes
 - 3. What distinguishes God from man is that man often changes his mind because he cannot foresee all that is coming, but God always foresees what is coming and changes His mind only in response to that foreseen situation. This is seen by man as changelessness in God.

I. GOD PERMITS MAN CHOOSE HIS DESTINY

- A. Gen. 3:22-24 - Sending man out and guarding the Garden of Eden
- B. Gen. 6:3, 5-6 - Regretted making man and determined to destroy him.
- C. Gen. 18:23-33 - Bargaining with Abraham over Sodom
- D. Jonah 3:4, 10 - Jonah and Nineveh

II. WHAT HAS GOD SAID ABOUT HIS WILL?

- A. God will change in how long He will bear with humankind
 - 1. Psalm 103:9; Isa. 57:16; Mic. 7:18; 2Peter 3:9
- B. He makes it contingent on what human beings do
 - 1. Rom. 11:22; John 15:2; Heb. 3:14

- C. He makes prayer mean something when He promises to respond to it
 - 1. Luke 18:1 - The parable of the unjust judge
 - 2. James 5:14-18 - Prayer has no meaning or purpose if God does not respond to the specific and individual pleas of believers

III. WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE?

- A. We must learn to distinguish between God's absolute will and God's permissive will
 - 1. God's absolute will cannot change without Him ceasing to be God
 - 2. God's permissive will is contingent on what man chooses.
 - 3. If God had created us without free will; He could program us to follow a pattern, and we would not vary from it
 - 4. But He created us and gave us a Divine gift, the ability to choose right or wrong, heaven or hell. How He judges us in the end will depend on us; He permits us to choose how His will is exercised toward us
- B. What does not change?
 - 1. His eternal power - Eph. 1:19-20
 - 2. His infinite wisdom - Rom. 16:27
 - 3. His limitless love - Rom. 8:38-39
 - 4. His unbreakable promises - Heb. 6:17-19
 - 5. His immutable word - 1Peter 1:25

IV. WHAT DOES CHANGE?

- A. The grace of God requires that He change the destiny of the obedient believer
 - 1. Eph. 1:7
- B. The mercy of God requires that He change the destiny of the penitent
 - 1. Heb. 4:16
- C. The love of God requires that He be patient with the erring
 - 1. 1John 4:9
- D. The righteousness of God requires that His judgment of all is based on their own choices
 - 1. 2Cor. 5:10

Conclusion:

- A. It is ironic that the Ninevites changed their ways, and God changed His plans for them, but Jonah was the only one who did not change
 - 1. "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to change often" (C. Newman)
 - 2. The willingness to change in this world is essential to growth and becoming more like our Father in heaven
- B. It is reassuring that when God promises salvation in Christ and a home in heaven for the saved, it is absolute and unchangeable
 - 1. It is also reassuring to know that if we change our ways, God will change our eternal destiny