

God unchanging

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Preacher: Daniel Chapallaz

[0:00] Thank you so much, David, for leading us through our service so far. Let me add my welcome! If you don't know who I am, my name is Daniel. I have the privilege of being one of the pastors here and also have the privilege of preaching on this great subject of God being unchanging.

Let's, before we get into that, let's just say a prayer together. Let's pray. Amen. Our Father God, we thank you that we come before you, the great, unchangeable God.

Thank you, as we've already thought about a little bit. It is good news for us that you are unchanging. And as we think about this some more this morning, we pray for your help.

We pray that you'd speak to us through your living and unchanging words. And we ask that you'd do all of us here this morning so much good as we do this. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, David's already helped us a little bit on this, about things that change. He's already said people change. And so in the spirit of showing photos of people changing, here's me when I was about 18 and there's me when I was about 30. I have changed and I will keep changing. And that's true of all of us. Not only do people change, but the weather changes.

[1:44] The weather outside gets sunny, wet, dry, cloudy, thundery, and that's all just in one day this week. It's astonishing. The weather changes. This week, my laptop wanted to install some updates.

My laptop changes our technology, changes they get updated, hopefully for the better. changes all around us. Some change can be good and some change can be bad and some can be somewhere in between. Around the corner from church, there was a coffee shop called Moe's. It was great to sometimes come down on the way to church and pop in and have a coffee there or go and meet people there.

But then earlier this year, it closed. And I was really sad about that change. And no more coffee, no more easily accessible coffee. But then a few weeks or months, I can't remember how long it was, it felt like a long time, a new coffee shop opens. And the coffee is better. I thought it was a bad change, but now it's a brilliant change. But some changes really aren't so good, are they?

Change of health, decline of health, losing our jobs, no income. A new manager comes in at work and they're not as good as the last one. In fact, they're pretty horrible. Change can feel unsettling. Even good change can feel unsettling. Maybe this morning you're here and you're new to Brighton. And there's something good in that. You're starting a new job or new studies. And it's exciting arriving to a new place, but maybe it also feels unsettling. You're getting to know a new area. You're wondering where are you going to find your friends from? You're trying to settle into a church, get to know the churches in Brighton. It's good change, but also difficult change.

[3:59] This morning, we're thinking about who God is. We're thinking about him being unchanging. And we're doing that this morning because at the moment in our Sunday morning services, we're looking at the doctrine of God. Doctrine being the teaching about a certain subject.

And in this case, what does the Bible teach us about who God is? And we've already seen some wonderful things. We've seen that God is the uncreated creator of all. We've seen that God is one, but is also three. Father, Son, and Spirit, the Trinity. We've seen that God is sovereign and in control of all things. And this morning we're thinking of God being unchanging. And there is surely no greater subject than thinking about who God is. But it's also, we also need to recognize our limited humanness in this. There is no higher and more complicated subject for our minds to get around than who is God's. And so much so that on Wednesday morning, after thinking for three days about God being unchangeable, my head was hurting. And so that's a reminder of our

humanness. And it's also an opportunity for me to say, I can't cover everything about God being unchanging this morning. And so if you have more you want to chat about or ask questions of me later, please do grab me or get in touch during the week. I'd love to chat more about God and particularly God being unchanging.

And that's where we are this week, seeing our unchanging God in a world that is constantly changing. We see that our God does not change. He is constant and unchangeable.

There's a verse in Deuteronomy where Moses is speaking and he says this of God. He says, he is the rock. We sung of God being the rock in our last song. He's a firm, immovable, faithful, unshakable, dependable one. And it goes on and Moses says, his works are perfect and all his ways are just. He's a faithful God who does no wrong. Upright and just is he.

God is perfect. He does nothing wrong. And so if God was a God who changed, then he would change for the worst because he's perfect. And I think that's important to say at the beginning of thinking about this. A preacher, theologian from the past, A.W. Pink, who apparently lived in Hove for a few years and went to church in Brighton, he says this of God. He said, God cannot change for the better.

[7:28] He is already perfect and being perfect, he cannot change for the worse. Altogether, unaffected by anything outside of himself. Improvement or deterioration is impossible. He can't change.

He is perpetually the same. He is altogether uninfluenced by the flight of time. There is no wrinkle upon the brow of eternity. Therefore, his power can never diminish, nor his glory ever fade. Because God is perfect. He cannot change. We'll look at a few bits in the Bible this morning, but we'll start off in that reading that we had in Psalm 102, which helps us to see this first point, that God is unchanging in his rule. This is a psalm, just a little bit of context. It's a psalm written by a person who is experiencing the changes of life. He's a person who is struggling, who is afflicted and has grown weak. We see that in the little title before the psalm begins.

And verse 12 shows us that this person who is afflicted, who is troubled by the changes of life, it shows us where he lifts his eyes to. Verse 12, but you, Lord, sit enthroned forever. Your renown endures through all generations. And so here in verse 12, we see something that doesn't change about God, something that is true forever. And that is he sits enthroned. He sits enthroned as ruler over all things forever. We live in a world where rulers change, where kingdoms rise and fall. But as Christian people, we can look up to the king who sits forever enthroned. He won't be deposed.

[9:50] He won't abuse his power. He is perfectly good and the rightful ruler of all things. In the book of Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar has a dream of a giant statue with a head made of gold, chest and arms of silver, a bronze belly and thighs, legs of iron and feet of iron and clay.

Each part representing different kingdoms, which will rise up and bring another down. King Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom is the head of gold, but Nebuchadnezzar, your kingdom's not going to last forever. Another will rise up and then another and then another. And as Daniel interprets the dream for King Nebuchadnezzar, he says this in Daniel chapter 2 verse 44, he says, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever.

Our God is the king of an eternal forever kingdom. He has an unchanging rule. And that's good news for us this morning. Because as we look at our news at the moment and see the real trouble in the Middle East with Israel and Lebanon, and we look at that situation and we see it so changeable and so shaky and it feels out of control.

The good news is this morning that we can lift up our eyes to the throne that stands firm and secure forever. And be reminded that though the kingdoms of this world will fall, there is a kingdom that we are part of that we are part of that we are part of that we aren't for.

And that's good news this morning. Secondly, we see of God that he is an unchanging being. Verse 25 of the Psalm. Have a look there with me.

[12:29] It says, in the beginning, you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands.

The psalmist speaks of the very oldest things. The foundations of the earth. The earth which has been since time began.

Can you think of anything older than that? It's ancient. The foundations of the earth have kept the earth spinning and going since the beginning of time.

And then he also speaks of the heavens, which are the work of God's hands. The stars, the galaxies, the sun that shines. Which have been since the beginning of time.

Think of the most permanent things of the earth. This is the Grand Canyon in the United States. How could that possibly change?

[13:37] Perhaps it doesn't change much in our lifetimes. But if you take the very long view, apparently it has changed. It would not look as it does today if it wasn't for the slow process of erosion by the Colorado River.

And so even the oldest and most permanent and unchanging looking things on earth, even they change. They change. But the psalmist says.

And the psalmist says of these things in verse 26. They will perish. The Grand Canyon will perish. But you, God, you remain. They will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing, you will change them and they will be discarded.

But you remain the same. God is unchanging. And your years will never end. And so even the sun that shines in the sky will have a day when it ceases to shine.

[14:54] But our God outlasts and outshines the sun. He remains the same yesterday, today and forever.

In his excellent book called Twelve Things God Can't Do, Nick Tucker, who's a vicar over in Hove, says this of God.

He says it is not natural then for us to conceive of anything as properly permanent. But God insists that this is how we think of him.

He is unlike anything in the creation because whilst everything else changes and eventually wears out like clothing, he remains the same.

And his years will never end. God is unchanging in his being.

[16:01] We change. Our world changes. But he remains the same. An unchanging being.

An unchanging character. An unchanging character. Just think for a moment, who are you? If you were to ask me, who am I?

I could say various things. I could say, I am Daniel. I'm a husband. I'm a son. I'm a brother. I'm a pastor. I'm a friend. I'm a cousin. I'm a man. And this morning, you are here with us and you are either a boy, girl, man, woman.

That's who you are. Some of you are brothers or sisters. Some of you are mums or dads. Some of you are husbands or wives. Some of you are uncles or aunties.

Some of you are granddads and grandmas. Some of you are employed and self-employed and unemployed and students. Some of you are friends. You are those things.

[17:11] They are who you are. They are what you are known as to some people. Who is God? Well, he reveals himself to us in this book, the Bible.

And in Exodus, as David's already read for us, when Moses asked God, who are you?

What is your name? Who do I tell people that you are? God simply says, I am who I am. Who I am changes.

Once I was a boy and now I am a man. I have always been a son but only recently become a husband. For four years I was never a brother and now I am.

I was a student. I was a retail assistant. I was a cleaner and now I'm a pastor. Who I am changes. Whereas when God says this, when he says I am who I am, he is simply saying I am always God and I always will be God.

[18:36] As a pastor, from time to time I've found myself needing to write a reference for people when they're applying for a job or something. And it's a great joy to sort of sit down and think, who are they?

What are they like? How dependable and trustworthy are they? In the Bible we have God's character revealed to us.

I'd love us to turn to Exodus chapter 34. Exodus 34. Exodus 34. Exodus 34.

Exodus 34 verses 4 to 7. So Moses chiseled out two stone tablets like their first ones.

And went up Mount Sinai early in the morning as the Lord had commanded him. And he carried the two stone tablets in his hands.

[19:48] Then the Lord came down in the cloud and he stood there with him and proclaimed his name. The Lord. And he passed in front of Moses proclaiming the Lord.

The Lord compassionate and gracious God. Slow to anger. Abounding in love and faithfulness. Maintaining love to thousands.

And forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents.

To the third and fourth generation. Moses who was told by the Lord. I am who I am.

Has more of the Lord and his great character. Great unchanging character revealed to him. In these verses. That the Lord is gracious and compassionate.

[20:53] He is abounding in love and faithfulness. But we also see. That he is slow to anger.

Which is good news for sinners. Because we also see that the holy and righteous unchanging God must judge sin.

Halfway through verse 7. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished. He punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.

But we also see. Alongside his good and right judgment of sin. We see. His wonderful love and faithfulness and compassion.

Shown to his people. And we see that in the covenant promises that he's made to his people. We see that in the law that was given to Moses.

[21:54] Moses which has provisions. For where human beings sin against the Lord. And as you read on through the Bible.

You see more of the Lord and his character revealed. More of his love and grace. And slow to anger and compassion. And unchanging faithfulness.

You see that shown to his changing people. We change. God doesn't. God doesn't. And in the book of Malachi.

And it would be good to turn to Malachi 3. It's the last book in the Old Testament. Malachi chapter 3. In this book.

Of Malachi. God is speaking to his people. Through his prophet Malachi. To his people who have rejected him. Who have not been faithful.

[23:11] Who have not feared and worshipped God as they should. And so how extraordinary. For the people of God to hear these words in verses 6 to 7.

Where God says, I the Lord do not change. So you descendants of Jacob are not destroyed. Ever since the time of your ancestors.

You have turned away from my decrees. And have not kept them. Return to me. And I will return to you.

Says the Lord Almighty. We see the gracious unchanging God. Who says, I the Lord do not change.

You have changed. You've rebelled against me. But I've not changed. And so here is the gracious call. To my people. Return to me.

[24:15] And I will return to you. He. He. The unchanging God. Is the only reason. His people haven't been wiped out.

Because of his character. Because of his unchanging commitment. To his covenant promises. And then if you go beyond Malachi.

You get to the New Testament. And we see more of how loving and compassionate God is to his people. As God takes on human flesh.

In the Lord Jesus Christ. And you might be thinking, Hang on a minute. If God became a human. Then hasn't he changed?

Well from what we see. In scripture. We can say no. For we read that Jesus is God in the flesh. And as God in the flesh. He's fully God.

[25:15] Fully divine. But also fully human. And in his human nature. He does experience change.

He experienced the changes of human bodies. As he grows older. And bigger. And weak. And frail. In his human body.

He experienced sufferings. And temptations. He grew tired. And hungry. As a human. Fully human. He changes. But as fully divine. As fully God. He does not. He cannot. Never once. Did he sin. Never once.

Did he say a bad word. Some of us on Sunday evenings. Have been looking at. Emotions. And we thought of. Jesus. How perfect he is.

[26:11] In his emotions. Always. Responding. Perfectly. To them. And so in Jesus.

Becoming human. We see God. And so in Jesus. We see God. God. Clearly. And visibly. Amongst us. And if you're in doubt. This morning.

That Jesus is. God. Well can we. Just turn briefly. To Hebrews 1. We'll read.

Just a few verses. From there. You'll see why. In a moment. Hebrews chapter 1.

This is a wonderful chapter. We won't read it all. But do you go and. Read it later. Which begins. To speak of. Jesus.

[27:06] The son of God. So wonderfully. And shows us. How. Jesus. Is. God. God. How he's.

Superior. To the angels. And in verse 10. Of Hebrews 1. We read this. And these verses. Should be familiar.

To us. Hebrews 1. Verse 10. He also says. In the beginning. Lord. You laid. The foundations. Of the earth.

And the heavens. Are the work. Of your hands. They will perish. But you remain. They will all wear out. Like a garment. You will roll them up.

Like a robe. Like a garment. They will be changed. But you remain. The same. And your years. Never end. Those should be familiar.

[28:02] Because those. Are verses. From Psalm 102. That we read earlier. Verses. Which are spoken. Of the Lord Jesus. In this passage. He is.

Unchangeably. God's. And so. In Jesus. We see God. Displayed to us. We see. The Lord. Compassionate. Gracious. Slow to anger.

Abounding. In love. And faithfulness. We see that. In Jesus. And surely. We see that. Most clearly. At the cross. Where the son of God.

In his. Perfect. Human nature. Could take on. Our sin. The sin. Of human beings. And face. The wrath. Of God.

For us. So. As we see. God's. Unchanging. Character. We see that.

[28:59] In Jesus. And as we dwell. On the truth. That God is. Unchanging. In his. Character. We can find. Good news. Of great.

Comfort. For us. If. We're Christian. People. This morning. Because. We might not. Know. Where we stand. With other. Human beings.

Maybe. Even. From one day. To the next. We've already said. Human beings. Are changeable.

Maybe. One day. We feel. Loved. And accepted.

By others. And the next. Day. We feel. Like. We just. Don't know. Whether they like. Us anymore. But.

Though human. Hearts. Change. God. Does not. Change. And so. We can.

[29:54] Know. What our. Standing. Before. God. Is. If. We've. Not. Turned. To him. In. Repentance. And. Are. Standing. With. God.

Right. Now. Is. Clear. We're. Under. God's. Wrath. For. Our. Sin. We. Cannot. Stand. Before him. But. If. We.

Have. Turned. To. God. In. Repentance. For. Our. Sin. Then. Our. Standing. With. God. Is. Also. Clear. And. It's. Secure. We.

Find. In. Him. That. Our. Sins. Are. For. Given. That. The. Price. Has. Been. Paid. By. His. Son. The. Lord. Jesus. God. Made. Flesh.

That. He. Has. Taken. On. Our. Judgment. For. Sins. And. So. We. Can. Stand. Secure. In. His. Unchanging. Love.

[30:47] Forever. And. So. These. Verses. Are. True. For. Christian. People. This. Morning. From. Romans. Eight. Where. Paul.

Says. For. I. Am. Convinced. That. That. Neither. Death. Nor. Life. Neither. Angels. Nor. Demons.
Neither. The. Present. Nor. The. Future. Nor. Any. Powers. Neither. The. Height.
Nor. The. Depth. Nor. Anything. Else. In. All. Creation. Will. Be. Able. To. Separate. Us. From. The.
Love. Of. God. That. Is. In. Christ. Jesus.

Our. Lord. Maybe. This. Morning. We. Are. Questioning. Our. Standing.
Before. God. Well. Our. Minds. And. Our. Love. It. Changes. But. If. We. Are. Trusting. However.
We. It. May. Feel.

[31:40] If. We. Are. Trusting. In. Jesus. As. Our. Savior. Then. You.
Can. Know. This. Morning. The. Security. Of. God's. Great. Love. For.
You.

That. Nothing. Can. Separate. You. From. Maybe. This. Morning. In. Some. Way. You. Do. Feel.
Unloved.

And. Rejected. By. Others. What. A. Comfort. To. Know. That. By. Looking. To. The. Lord. Jesus.
As. Your. Savior. You. Are. So. Precious.

And. Loved. By. His. Deep. Unchanging. And. Boundless. Love. That. Will. Never. Run. Dry. We.
Know. Where. We. Stand. Because. Our. God's. Character. Is. Unchanging. And. Finally. Just. For.

[32:36] Few. Minutes. This. Unchanging. God. Has. An. Unchanging. Words.
Just. Want. To.

Read. A. Few. Verses. From. Isaiah. Back. In. The. Old. Testament. Isaiah. And. Chapter. 40.
Amen. Amen. Isaiah.

40. From. Verse. 6. Where. We're. Told. By. Isaiah.

The. Prophet. A. voice. Says. Cry. Out. And. I. Said. What. Shall. I. Cry. All. People. Are. Like.
Grass. And. All. Their. Faithfulness.

Is. Like. The. Flowers. Of. The. Fields. The. Grass. Withers. And. The. Flowers. Fall. Because. The.
Breath. Of. The. Lord. Blows. On. Them. Surely.

[33:34] Their. People. Are. Grass. The. Grass. Withers. And. The.
Flowers. Fall. But. The. Word. Of. Our. God. Endures.

Forever. Another. Reminder. In. These. Verses. That. The. We. Change. We. Change. Like. The.
Grass. Changes. We. Here.

One. Day. And. Gone. The. Next. But. There. Is. Something. That. Does. Not. Change. For.
Already. Said. God. Endures. Forever. And. This.

Tells. Us. That. The. Words. Of. God. Endures. Forever. Forever. In. An. Argument. Or. Debate. It's.
Often.

A. Nice. Feeling. To. Feel. Like. You. You. Had. The. Final. Word. The. Final. Say. On. People. On.
People. Well. This. Morning. We. Have. In. Front.

[34:26] Of. Us. God's. Word. Which. Really. Is. The. Last. Words. The.
Word. That. Last. For. Eternity.

That. Endures. Forever. And. So. I. Wonder. Have. You. Lost. Your. Excitement. For. Reading. The.
Bible.

Maybe. It. Used. To. Thrill. You. Every. Day. You. Would. Open. It. And. And. Now. It. Just. Feels.
Like. One. Of. Those. Routine. Exercises. It.

Feels. Like. Something. You. Must. Do. Rather. Than. You. Want. To. Do. And. Maybe. Even. You.
You. Have. Not. Touched. It. For. Weeks. Or.

Months. Well. The. Exciting. Thing. In. These. Verses. Is. That. We. See. That. This. Word. The.
[35:20] Bible. Is. Living. It's. Enduring. Forever. It's. Not. A. Book.

That. Should. Grow. Dusty. And. Irrelevant. On. The. Shelf. If.

You. Want. Such. A. Book. I. Can. Give. You. Lots. But. This. Is. A. Book. That's. Filled. With. Life.
Giving. Words. Which. Stand. The. Test.

Of. Time. Life. Giving. Words. Which. Are. Dependable. And. Speak. Into. This. Ever. Changing.
World. Of. Us. And.

We. Know. That. Because. We. Know. The. One. Who. Speaks. Them. Is. Himself. Unchanging.
Who. To. Thought.

We. Read. We. Read. Words. Which. Were. Given. To. People. Thousands. Of. Years. Ago. And.
Still. Be. Interested. In. Them. Which.

[36:12] Show. Us. Who. Has. Created. The. World. Which. Give. Us.
Meaning. Words. Which. Give. Us. Meaning. To. Our. Existence. And.
Certain. Hope. Beyond. The. Grave. There.

Are. Many. People. In. Our. World. And. What's. My. Meaning. In. Life. Or.
The. Bible. Would. Give. You. Clear. Answers. To. Those. What. Feel. Like. Modern. Questions.
And. Struggles. And. Yet. Are. So. Powerfully. Answered. In. This. Ancient.
But. Unchangingly. Relevant. Book. Which. Are. The. Words. Of. Our. Incredible. Unchanging.
Gods. These.
Must. Be. Words. Then. From. Someone. Who. Is. Not. Like. Us. One. Who. Is. Not. Subject. To.
Change. And.

[37:09] So. Don't. Neglect. This. Book. Read. This. Book. Enjoy. This.
Book. As. The. Words. Of. Our. Unchanging. God.

Speak. To. Us. Afresh. Day. By. Day. Words. Which. Are. Relevant. To. Us. Which. Speak. And.
Lies. An. Anchor. For. Us. In. A. World. Which. Shifts. And. Changes. For. These.
Are. The. Words. Of. Our. King. Who. Sits. Enthroned. Forever. Whose. Rule. Is. Unchanging.
These. Are. The.
Words. Of. The. Perfect. God. Whose. Character. Will. Not. Change. Who. Is. Gracious. And.
Compassionate. And. Slow. To.

[38:02] Anger. And. Abounding. In. Love. This. Is. Our. Unchanging. Gods.
And. The. Thought.

Of. Him. Being. Unchanging. And. Unlike. Us. Great. In. His. Being. These. Thoughts. Ought. To.
Lead. Us. To. Sing. His. Praises.
And. We're. Going. to. Do. That. Now. In. A. Couple. Of. Songs. That. The. First. Of. Which. Is.
Immortal. Invisible.