**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**MALACHI-005. THE UNCHANGING LORD by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."*

*Malachi 3:6*

The scriptural revelations of the divine Name are always the basis of intensely practical admonition. The Bible does not think it worth while to proclaim the Name of God without building on the proclamation promises or commandments. There is no mere theology in Scripture; and it does not speak of attributes, nor give dry abstractions of infinitude, eternity, omniscience, unchangeableness, but lays stress on the personality of God, which is so apt to escape us in these abstract conceptions, and thus teaches us to think of this personal God our Father, as infinite, eternal, knowing all things, and never changing. There is all the difference in our attitude towards the very same truth if we think of the unchangeableness of God, or if we think that our Father God is unchangeable. In our text the thought of Him as unchanging comes into view as the foundation of the continuance of the unfaithful sons of Jacob in their privileges and in their very lives. I am the Lord, Jehovah, the Self-existent, the Eternal whose being is not under the limitations of succession and time. Because I am Jehovah, I change not; and because Jehovah changes not, therefore our finite and mortal selves abide, and our infinite and sinful selves are still the objects of His steadfast love.

Let us consider, first, the unchangeable God, and second, the unchanging God as the foundation of our changeful lives.

**I. The unchangeable God.**

In the great covenant-name Jehovah there is revealed an existence which reverses all that we know of finite and progressive being, or finite and mortal being, or finite and variable nature. With us there are mutations arising from physical nature. The material must needs be subject to laws of growth and decadence. Our spiritual nature is subject to changes arising from the advancement in knowledge. Our moral nature is subject to fluctuations; circumstances play upon us, and nothing continueth in one stay. Change is the condition of life. It means growth and happiness; it belongs to the perfection of creatures. But the unchangeableness of God is the negation of all imperfection, it is the negation of all dependence on circumstances, it is the negation of all possibility of decay or exhaustion, it is the negation of all caprice. It is the assurance that His is an underived, self-dependent being, and that with Him is the fountain of light; it is the assurance that, raised above the limits of time and the succession of events, He is in the eternal present, where all things that were and are, and are to come, stand naked and open. It is the assurance that the calm might of His eternal will acts, not in spasms of successive volitions preceded by a period of indecision and equilibrium between contending motives, but is one continuous uniform energy, never beginning, never bending, never ending; that the purpose of His will is the eternal purpose which He hath purposed in Himself. It is the assurance that the clear vision of His infinite knowledge, from the heat of which nothing is hid, has no stages of advancement, and no events lying nebulous in a dim horizon by reason of distance, or growing in clearness as they draw nearer, but which pierces the mists of futurity and the veils of the past and the infinities of the present, and from the beginning to the end knoweth all things. It is the assurance that the mighty stream of love from the heart of God is not contingent on the variations of our character and the fluctuations of our poor hearts, but rises from His deep well, and flows on for ever, the river of God which is full of water. It is the assurance that round all the majesty and the mercy which He has revealed for our adoration and our trust there is the consecration of permanence, that we might have a rock on which to build and never be confounded. Is there anywhere in the past an act of His power, a word of His lip, a revelation of His heart which has been a strength or a joy or a light to any man? It is valid for me, and is intended for my use. He fainteth not, nor is weary. The bush burns and is not consumed. I will not alter the thing that has gone out of my lips. By two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we have strong consolation.

**II. The unchanging God as the foundation of our changeful lives.**

In the most literal sense our text is true. Because He lives we live also. He is the same for ever, therefore we are not consumed. The foundation of our being lies beyond and beneath all the mutable things from which we are tempted to believe that we draw our lives, and is in God. The true lesson to be drawn from the mutable phenomena of earth is--heaven. The many links in the chain must have a staple. Reason requires that behind all the fleeting shall be the permanent. There must be a basis which does not partake of change. The lesson from all the mutable creation is the immutable God.

Since God changes not, the life of our spirits is not at the mercy of changing events. We look back on a lifetime of changing scenes through which we have passed, and forward to a similar succession, and this mutability is sad to many of us, and in some aspects sad to all, so powerless we are to fix and arrest any of our blessings. Which we shall keep we know not; we only know that, as certainly as buds and blossoms of spring drop, and the fervid summer darkens to November fogs and December frosts, so certainly we shall have to part with much in our passage through life. But if we let God speak to us, the necessary changes that come to us will not be harmful but blessed, for the lesson that the mutability of the mutual is meant to impress upon us is, the permanency of the divine, and our dependence, not on them, but on Him. We may look upon all the world of time and chance and think that He who Himself is unchanging changeth all. The eye of the tempest is a point of rest. The point in the heavens towards which, according to some astronomers, the whole of the solar system is drifting, is a fixed point. If we depend on Him, then change is not all sad; it cannot take God away, but it may bring us nearer to Him. We cannot be desolate as long as we have Him. We know not what shall be on the morrow. Be it so; it will be God's to-morrow. When the leaves drop we can see the rock on which the trees grow; and when changes strip the world for us of some of its waving beauty and leafy shade, we may discern more clearly the firm foundation on which our hopes rest. All else changes. Be it so; that will not kill us, nor leave us utterly forlorn as long as we hear the voice which says, I am the Lord; I change not; therefore ye are not consumed.

God's purposes and promises change not, therefore our faith may rest on Him, notwithstanding our own sins and fluctuations. It is this aspect of the divine immutability which is the thought of our text. God does not turn from His love, nor cancel His promises, nor alter His purposes of mercy because of our sins. If God could have changed, the godless forgetfulness of, and departure from, Him of the Sons of Jacob would have driven Him to abandon His purposes; but they still live--living evidences of His long-suffering. And in that preservation of them God would have them see the basis of hope for the future. So this is the confidence with which we should cheer ourselves when we look upon the past, and when we anticipate the future. The sins that have been in our past have deserved that we should have been swept away, but we are here still. Why are we? Why do we yet live? Because we have to do with an unchanging love, with a faithfulness that never departs from its word, with a purpose of blessing that will not be turned aside. So let us look back with this thought and be thankful; let us look forward with it and be of good cheer. Trust yourself, weak and sinful as you are, to that unchanging love. The future will have in it faults and failures, sins and shortcomings, but rise from yourself to God. Look beyond the light and shade of your own characters, or of earthly events to the central light, where there is no glimmering twilight, no night, no variableness nor shadow of turning. Let us live in God, and be strong in hope. Forward, not backward, let us look and strive; so our souls, fixed and steadied by faith in Him, will become in a manner partakers of His unchangeableness; and we too in our degree will be able to say, The Lord is at my side; I shall not be moved.