

Series: God Is Unchangeable #1716
Title: Various Scriptures
To The Praise of God's Glory

Thank you for joining me today from wherever you are and by however you listen as we meet together coast-to-coast here in the United States and all the way around the world. We continue today to understand what is meant by the immutability of God. God does not change, and one of the ways in which He does not change is that God is unchanging in His decree. The decree of God is His eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass (Berkhof). The resounding truth of all of Scripture is that God foreordains everything that comes to pass and in this respect God's will never changes.

I have been sharing with you eight characteristics to God's decree, based on the paper Larry Pettegrew put together. Thus far we have covered the first six. Briefly, these are: God's decree is single, it is comprehensive, it is unconditional and not based on any outside influences, the decree is eternal, it is effectual and God's decree ordains sin and controls its effects. That's six. And today the seventh characteristic of God's decree is this: the purpose of the decree is to manifest and bring praise to God's glory.

I have a few Scriptures here I want to share with you with the hope that you use these in your own worship of God. As I read these, listen for how each one rejoices that, in God's eternal decree, we are the recipients of a very great salvation that has thoroughly rescued us from sin. God foreordained our salvation and because of this we praise Him. Romans 11, verses 33-36 is the great Pauline benediction as he brings to conclusion his three-chapter, brilliant teaching on the place of Israel in God's sovereign design. The Apostle bursts forth in adoration as follows,

"Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴ For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? ³⁵ Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? ³⁶ For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen." I love this and every time I read it and use it in my prayers I think about how unfathomable are God's ways, indeed. As Paul writes about the decree of God it immediately leads him to break out in thanksgiving! His letter is not finished, but here is this rousing song of praise.

And if you really want to see what God's decree is and His decree in motion, then read Romans chapters 9-11 and you will see that God very much has a plan for Israel and the Jewish people. He is far from finished with them yet. Hint: the church is *not* a replacement for Israel!

A second chapter that captures this seventh characteristic of God's decree is Ephesians 1. As we have already seen, the Apostle uses the opening chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians to write about the singularity of God's decree and how comprehensive it is. But here, let me quote verse 12. Ephesians 1, verse 12, **"To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory."** What is the end or what is the purpose of our divinely decreed salvation? It is to the praise of God's glory. And, verses 13b and 14, **"You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory."**

Having been sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit, we are the redemption of God's own possession, listen, *to the praise of God's glory*. This is why the worship of Christ, who sits on His throne in heaven, goes like this, **"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created."** That's Revelation 4, verse 11. (Revelation 4.11.) God decreed us to exist. Because of His *will* everything exists. Everything that was created exists by God's counsel. Therefore, He is to receive glory, honor, and power. So what is the purpose of God's decree? The purpose of the decree is to manifest and bring praise to God's glory.

And on that glorious note, we come to the eighth and final characteristic and the one of most interest in this current series: God's decree is immutable. That is, His decree never changes. Job 23, verses 13 and 14 in the ESV reads, **"He is unchangeable and who can turn Him back? What He desires, that He does. For He will complete what He appoints for me, and many such things are in His mind."**

In the NASB translation Job chapter 23, verses 13 and 14 reads, **"But He is unique and who can turn Him? And what His soul desires, that He does. ¹⁴For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such decrees are with Him."** This affirms what we have been saying: God's decree is unchangeable. His will is set and established. His will never varies. His counsel does not change. His purpose never alters. Psalm 33.11 says, **"The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation."** And Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 17 talks about the **"Unchangeableness of His purpose."** Give these verses a read on your own time, will you? Job 23.13 and 14. Psalm 33.11. Hebrews 6.17.

Having covered these eight characteristics to the divine decree I now want to read to you a verse that, when we comment on it, will help us remember, in an easy, rhyming sort of way what is true about God's decree. Regarding salvation, Ephesians 1 again and this time verse 4, **"[God] chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world..."** That is, before time began, God chose those people whom He will save from our sins. God's salvation decree was made before the foundation of the world, and it never changes. Those whom God predestined to be saved will be saved. Nothing we do or do not do changes that.

In the seventeenth century there was a Polish and German theologian by the name of Johannes Crellius. And he taught that what God decreed before the foundation of the world could be changed, in real time, throughout history. I want to introduce you to a phrase of his in a moment, but first I need to define a word he uses. The word is "nill." N-I-L-L. To nill means to *un*-will. To nill is to undo the will. Here's an example. If my will is to eat chicken parmesan for dinner that means I am going to eat that dish at dinnertime. Ah, but what if I get to 6PM and decide I want lasagne instead. Then, I have nilled what I willed. I changed my mind. My revised will is to eat lasagne.

Here is what Crellius said. He said that what God willed in the past He could nill in the present. And vice versa: what God nilled in the past He could will in the present. Crellius did not believe God's decree was unchanging. He said, "God can now will what He before nilled and nill now what He before willed (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume I, 204-205*)."

In that same century the sound minded theologian, who has become a friend of ours, Francis Turretin took Johannes Crellius to task and refuted him. Turretin rightly denies saying, God does not nill what is His will and God does not will what He has nilled. Turretin re-affirms right theology. I thought will and nill an interesting way to remember this and wanted to share this nugget with you. Some of you will connect with this and find it helpful – a memory device using a rhyme. And others of you will not find this helpful. That's OK. Use it if you can.

Of course, people, like Johannes Crellius, have objections to the unchanging decree of God. It is popular to argue against this, because as sinful human beings we like to think that the decree of God is contrary to our free, moral agency. We put a lot of stock in *our* "free will." And there are other objections. But we will not go into those, because remember: this is not a series on God's decree. Yes, I know we have spent three episodes on this, but the reason has been so we can prove His decree does not change. If you want to talk about concerns you have or arguments you have against the decree, let's engage those another time. I promise you all objections can be handled with the Word of God.

Please join us again next time as we continue to discover the unchanging God.

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