

**Series: God Is Unchangeable #1717**

**Title: Various Scriptures  
When God Decrees Trouble**

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 have established that God does not change and we have pinpointed three ways in particular: the Lord does not change in His being, in His perfections, and in His decree. Just as we leave His decree and consider the unchanging nature of God in total, I want to share with you some implications to this doctrine. These will be pastoral implications. This is practical and encouraging. I hope that you will continue with us.

The first of these deals with what was said last time. Do you remember that Ephesians 1 verse 4 says, **“[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. From this, those of us who are Christians, we find our first encouragement. God’s decree of our salvation is unchangeable.

Consider 2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 19, **“The firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His...’”** And in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 5 Jesus says, **“He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”** 2 Timothy 2.19 and Revelation 3.5. We should mark these promises in our Bibles.

Thomas Watson comments, “[This is] comfort to the godly in regard of their salvation...God’s counsel of election is unchangeable. Once elected forever elected. The book of God’s decree has no [error] in it, no blottings out. Once justified, never unjustified. God never repents of His electing love. ‘He loved them to the end.’ John 13.1. Therefore, if [you] are a believer, comfort [yourself] with this, the immutability of God’s decree (*A Body of Divinity*, 70-71).” Close quote.

This truth is particularly poignant for those of you who feel you can lose your salvation. You believe that God has saved you from your sin through Christ, *but* that if you sin or commit some sort of major sin, or if you backslide and like the prodigal son take off and live outside the will of God, then you are no longer saved. For you, the fact that God’s decree does not change, this must give you assurance that your salvation stands. Because God chose you before the foundation of the world, because He set His love upon you and His will and His love never change, then repent of your sins (yes!), seek again Christ and return to following Him (yes!), *and* accept that you are still a member of the beloved family of God.

Furthermore, because God’s decree is eternal and unchangeable, then God did not elect you for salvation in the first place based upon how *you* responded to *Him*! He chose you, from before time began, regardless of what you did or did not do. I have taught this before when we discussed predestination and I re-affirm this here: Christians were not chosen based upon what God knew we would do. It is *not* that He looked down the corridor of time, saw people who would believe in Christ, and then chose us based on our decision. That is not what the Bible says. What it says *is* that God first chose us, *then* all who are chosen believe.

Watson writes, “[We] were not elected because we believed, but [we] believed because [we] were elected (70).” Listen to Acts chapter 13, verse 48 for proof, **“As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”** In eternity past God appointed certain people to eternal life and those whom He has appointed to eternal life *then* believe. The bottom line is our salvation does not depend on us. Our salvation depends on *God*. God, through Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit, has saved us, is saving us, and will save us. He keep us saved. For the genuine Christian, once saved, always saved. This is what we believe. I hope this encourages you, as it does my own heart. And I hope this is convicting and clarifying to those of you with bad theology.

Think about it. If God's decree was always changing, then what I have just said would be untrue. We would move in and out of God's saving grace, like the Roman Catholics, other religions, and cults believe. We would have salvation one day and lose it the next and regain it, lose it, regain it, and so and so forth based on our actions. But this is not the case, because God does not change His eternal will for us.

Listen to Arthur W. Pink, another pastor/theologian, "If [God] varied as we do, if He willed one thing today and another tomorrow, if He were controlled by caprice, who would confide in Him? But, all praise to His glorious name, He is ever the same. His purpose is fixed, His will is stable, His word is sure. Here then is a *rock* on which we may fix our feet, while the mighty torrent is sweeping away everything around us. The permanence of God's character guarantees the fulfilment of His promise: ['For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken,' says the Lord who has compassion on you.] (*The Attributes of God*, 49)." This quotation ends there with Isaiah 54, verse 10. Isaiah 54.10.

The second implication to what we have discussed is this: believers can take comfort that when God decrees trouble for us, we can be assured this comes from God and He will be our peace through it. Perhaps you who believe in Christ have received *that call* from your doctor, following up on your tests. The call that confirms you have a disease. Or you take the dreaded call to say a loved one has died. Or one of many possibilities that makes your life a struggle and a challenge. In the providence of God you are going through a dark and difficult time. My friend, indeed this fits under the sovereignty of God for you *and* the Lord is with you now.

He has not left you alone to your trouble. Even when He has brought it upon you, *especially* when He has brought this upon you, He'll walk you through it. Psalm 23, verse 4, "**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**" Isaiah 41, verse 10, "**Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.**" I say to you today, in the words of Paul to Timothy (2 Timothy 4.22), "**The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.**"

Thomas Watson again, "Murmur not at God's dealings; His work goes on, nothing falls out but what He has wisely decreed from eternity; everything shall promote God's design, and fulfil His decree (70)." It is easy (I know this from personal experience) to *feel* that God has abandoned us to our troubles. We feel like Solomon's lover in the Song of Solomon, chapter 5 and verse 6, "**I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had turned away and had gone! My heart went out to him as he spoke. I searched for him but I did not find him; I called him but he did not answer me.**" Have you felt that way about God? I have.

And yet, we hear the Lord speak as He did in Jeremiah 31, verse 3, "**The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.'**" God's love *is* unchanging. His love *is* immutable. As Watson says, "He may change His countenance, but not His heart (68)." God brings trouble into our lives, or He allows it, for many different reasons – most of which we will never know. Sometimes this is for discipline. His countenance towards is to frown upon our wayward ways and to draw us again to Himself. But even then, His heart has not changed. He loves you. He loves me. He loves us always and forever, for He has decreed it.

More encouraging implications next time as we continue to discover who God Is.

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