

Series: God Is Unchangeable #1714

Title: Various Scriptures

God's Unchanging Decree

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. It is good to have you here, as always, and I want to begin with a few invitations. The first one is to invite you to listen to *God Is* consistently. The primary reason for this is that each day's teaching builds on the day before and that day before that and so on. If you miss (you are inconsistent), then you are most likely missing key pieces of information that, when added together, give us a full picture of who God is. Now we are talking about the unchanging nature of God. There is much to this, so you run the risk of misunderstanding His character if you get the message in bits and pieces. I do not want that to happen to you.

Let me give an example. I am building the case for God's immutability, that is that He does not change. And as I build my case, biblically, I need time to do that. So, it may *seem*, based on what I have shared so far, that God is coming across as statuesque, completely without feeling, robotic, removed, and that immutability equates with immobility. I say that God does not change and you fall into the trap of thinking, "Oh, then how can He relate to us and us to Him?" But I do not mean to leave you with the impression that God is an immobile statue, so set apart from us that He doesn't care about us; that He can't or won't interact with us in a dynamic relationship; isn't in any way on the move in our lives. No! *God is always in action!* He is no cold, hard hearted, sculpture.

While there is change all around God, He does not change. But that does not mean He is disengaged from what is going on in our lives. Immutable does not equal immobile. And we will see this, *but* you have to stick with us. Anyone who has already dropped off or those who are hit and miss on the broadcast and podcast – I am concerned that they do not have a full picture of *God*, and that's a very dangerous development. Remember, every radio broadcast doubles as an internet podcast available from godisministry.org, that's godisministry.o-r-g, so you never have to miss an episode.

I know several of you who listen to each episode more than once to capture all the content. I think that is *great*. Also, some of you take advantage of the manuscripts that accompany each podcast. You click "Read Along" and get precisely what I am saying in a document that's printable and saveable. Very good. We need to hear biblical truth again and again before it settles in our minds and hearts. And each of us have more than enough distractions coming from the *lying* world around us so that getting *truth* into our lives is an uphill battle. My first, kind, invitation is to listen to *God Is* consistently. And do get these manuscripts, please.

My second invitation is to read the Scriptures for yourself. Especially in the next few days there will be many Scripture references given. Please read these. If you can follow along in the Bible as you listen, good, but I know many of you are on the road or you're just not able to have the text open in front of you, especially for you, read the texts later. Think about them. Pray through them. Nothing beats seeing the Bible passages in front of you, with your own two eyes, or for those of you who are blind, to follow along the words in your own braille Bible.

Third, please reach out to me with any questions or comments you have. There must be things I say which raise questions for you? Surely you have some feedback or comments? I absolutely welcome disagreement, as well. I await your email and letter. mark@godisministry.org and God Is, PO Box 802 Winchester Massachusetts 01890. For those of you wondering if there are any Christians in Massachusetts, or for those of you living overseas, are there any Christians in America – yes! We are here. And I would love to hear from you. Write today. Do not delay. All questions and comments are welcome. I hope you will take these three invitations and respond, "Yes, yes, and yes."

Now, we have seen, in the Bible, that God is unchanging in His being and God is unchanging in His perfections. As we get going today, I want to show you that God is unchanging in His counsel, will, and decree. Counsel. Will. Decree. These are three words used to say essentially the same thing. I will focus us, using the word decree.

What do we mean when we talk about God's decree? Let's borrow a definition from theologian Louis Berkhof. "[God's] eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, [God foreordains] whatsoever comes to pass (*Systematic Theology*, 102)." Let me lay that on you again. God's decree is God's eternal purpose according to the counsel of His will, whereby, for His own glory, God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass.

We talked about this before, especially concerning God's will in saving certain people from our sin. God's election of sinners, God's predestination of sinners. If you want to hear what we said about this, in an extensive study well worth listening to, visit our website and look for the series God Saves. In the series God Saves we study Romans chapter 8 and cover God's eternal purpose, will, and foreordination of salvation. This speaks to God's decree. On the website godisministry.org click the link for Series and you will see God Saves. Take a listen.

The resounding truth of all of Scripture is that God foreordains everything that comes to pass. And that whatever He wills does not change. A good verse to capture here is Isaiah 46, verse 10 in which the Lord says, **"My counsel shall stand" or "My purpose will be established."** (Isaiah 46.10.) I think it will prove helpful if we spend a little time talking about the characteristics of the decree of God. I have eight. One of these deals with the fact that the decree of God never changes. I think the other seven will give us a better understanding of God's decree so let me share these with accompanying Scripture.

I am borrowing the good work done here by Larry D. Pettegrew in his paper *The Doctrine of God*. First, God's decree is single. Ephesians 1, verse 11 speaks of the, **"the counsel of His will."** God has one will. We may experience the will of God in many different ways, but He has only one prevailing will. It is *the* counsel of His *will*. Second, the decree of God is comprehensive. God's decree covers everything and everyone. Ephesians 1, verse 11 also says the Lord, **"works all things after the counsel of His will."** Note: *all* things.

Here are some examples. The good actions of His people. Ephesians 2, verse 10, **"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."** Also sinful acts. Proverbs 16, verse 4 is a verse that shocks a lot of people. Listen to this. **"The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil."** (Proverbs 16.4.) The Book of Acts teaches us that the world's worst sin, putting Jesus to death, was part of God's eternal decree. Listen to Acts chapter 2, verse 23, **"This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death."** The decree of God included Christ's death by godless men. The decree of God is comprehensive. It covers all things: good, sin (evil), and the length and place of each person's life and death.

Listen to Acts 17, verse 26, **"He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation..."** Or Job 14, verse 5, **"Since his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; and his limits You have set so that he cannot pass."** And Psalm 39, verse 4, **"Lord, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am."** Job and the Psalmist David speak about the limits God has set for us and the vanity of life. This gives each of us a potent reminder: we are not immortal. Life is transient. Blink and it is gone. God has set the limit and extent of our days. The number of our months is with Him. The decree of God is comprehensive.

Much more on this next time when you join us because God Is.

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