

I. INTRODUCTION.

A. Scripture text: **Malachi 3:1-6.**

“Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says the LORD of hosts. [2] “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap. [3] “And He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to the LORD offerings in righteousness. [4] “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD, as in the days of old and as in former years. [5] “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien, and do not fear Me,” says the LORD of hosts. [6] “For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

B. As we think back to 2008, we recall the many blessings enjoyed. As we also remember the hard times we do so in hopes of learning from our past mistakes.

C. In our lesson today we want to focus a bit on the future, and look at it as a time of change. World events, scientific discovery, medical advances, and human tragedy will continue to alter our lives.

D. In the midst of a fast changing society (that may be headed nowhere fast) there is a something that remains unchangeable--God.

E. Yet, this unchangeable entity, that created and sustains the universe demands change. The Unchangeable demands that we change. Let us take a look at how God does not change and how we should.

II. THINGS THAT DO NOT CHANGE.

A. God does not change as we consider His attributes (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8; Isa. 51:6).

(Isa 51:6) “Lift up your eyes to the sky, Then look to the earth beneath; For the sky will vanish like smoke, And the earth will wear out like a garment, And its inhabitants will die in like manner, But My salvation shall be forever, And My righteousness shall not wane.

(Heb 13:8) Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and today, *yes* and forever.

Salvation is forever and righteousness will not wane.

B. The Word of God is unchanging (Psa. 119:89; Isa. 40:8).

(Psa 119:89) Forever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven.

(Isa 40:8) The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

C. The kingdom of God does not change (Heb. 12:28).

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe;

D. The promises of God will not change (Heb. 10:23; 2Pet. 3:9).

(Heb 10:23) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

(2Pet 3:9) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

Undoubtedly many more.

E. It is good to know these things do not change. We have something solid to hold on to in a fast-paced, ever changing world of sin and temptation.

III. THINGS THAT MUST CHANGE.

A. But there are some areas that must change in our life if we are to be faithful to the One who does not change. The Unchangeable requires change in those that follow Him.

B. There are many who do not like change. We have our own little “comfort zone” and to have that zone invaded means trouble. Changes in weather, age, politics, physical surrounds, etc., are all ways in which our “comfort zone” is attacked.

- C. Another way our comfort zone is attacked is by X demanding change. He wants change in individuals, sometimes in entire churches (Rev. 2 & 3).
- D. We must learn to change and follow Him who is Unchangeable.

IV. THINGS WE CAN CHANGE TO BETTER SERVE GOD.

Briefly, five areas of life where God demands change:

A. First, **we must repent of sin.**

Write God an actual letter and list the sins you want to repent of. Then everyday when you do your Bible reading, read that letter (2Cor. 7:10; Lk. 13:3; Mt. 3:8).

(Mt 3:8) “Therefore bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance;

(Lk 13:3) “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

(2Cor 7:10) For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading to salvation*; but the sorrow of the world produces death.

B. Second, **we must be converted.**

To be converted means to change, to have a new life. Jesus taught that for men to enter into the kingdom of heaven they must be converted, and become like a little child. That is, they must be one who is able to be molded and shaped (Mt. 18:3).

and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.

(Example of the difference in sanding metal vs. wood by hand.)

C. Third, **we must set our mind on heavenly things.**

Our focus must be one that is upward and outward. Selfishness and materialism have no place in one who is trying to follow God (Col. 3:2,3; Mt. 6:19-21).

(Mt 6:19-21) “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. [20] “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; [21] for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

(Col 3:2-3) Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. [3] For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

D. Fourth, **we must live by faith and not by sight.**

This does not mean to live foolishly, but it does mean to live in such a way that it is evident that you are putting your faith in God rather than anything else. Many people like to have things laid out, organized, and orderly, but life is to be lived by faith! (2Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20).

(2Cor 5:7) for we walk by faith, not by sight--

(Gal 2:20) “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

E. Fifthly, **we must live by God's word and not our traditions.**

Traditions are easy because they are comfortable. “Because we’ve always done it that way” does not attack our “comfort zone.” Yet, the Pharisees were condemned because they had allowed tradition to dictate their thinking rather than the word of God (Mt. 15:7-9).

“You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, [8] ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. [9] ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’“

(Sometimes this transition from Gospel to tradition is so slow that it is unnoticed and we think our tradition is gospel!)

V. CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. We should rejoice in the fact that God does not change (His word, promises, or kingdom).
- B. We should also rejoice that we are not robots, forced to do His will. By having the power of choice we have something special.
- C. We should rejoice that we can change our lives, improve, and thereby become more like God.
- D. Change your life today by responding to Him who does not change.
- E. Plan of salvation for non-Xians, erring Xians.