



**Does God ever change
His mind, or is this
preordained too?**



**Addressed by
Bill Pierros**

Question the Question

This question takes a “zoom lens” approach. It is a loaded question so we must use a “wide angle lens” approach to the answer that incorporates other necessary concepts we know about God. Faced with a question we may not know, it’s always a good idea to focus on what we do know.



Getting a Handle on “Pre” - words

Preordained-predestined preoccupation

Predestination is often misunderstood and certainly often misapplied

The overzealous parent

Conveying tremendous love so much that at times it offends others
“To the Saints in Ephesus the faithful in Christ Jesus”

Some help from Ephesians 1:3-6

NIV Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Verse 3

Praise God because every spiritual blessing is ours in Christ—nothing withheld

Verse 4

Christ's own blessing—union with Christ
Union with the One who is above every power
—Connected inseparably
—From beginning of Creation

Verse 3

Chosen in heaven-- every blessing of heaven is ours
Union with one already in glory
Illustration: Passport line
Already/not yet
Trials of life endure, long way to go but **we are already there: connected**
What are the blessings mentioned in Verse 3?

Verses 4-6

Sanctification: (4&5)
Sonship: (verse 5)
Adoption (verse 5)
Grace: (verse 6)
He chose us in Him not in us
Not because of background, history, who we know, what we've done, social standing, race, work ethic, where we went to school, how many friends we have **because he chose us long ago** before we could count ourselves worthy
"Nothing in my hands I bring/Simply to Thy Cross I cling"
Not just absence of human cause but presence of divine cause
Gives us comfort in our daily struggle
Connected, united, raised up, already in heaven yet still on earth and tainted with sin
Glorious ruins—Ancient Greece
Illustration: man who wouldn't become a Christian "I'm not predestined"
Last things first

Predestination is not an evangelism plan.
Predestination is not a sledgehammer to punish theological enemies

Predestination is for the **assurance of God's people** because they know they are his own.
Predestination is for when we are struggling **because we have ultimate, eternal, and timeless assurance.**

God says I'm here for you. I love you.

So what does this have to do with whether God changes his mind? Everything!!

Who Are We Talking About Here?

Anytime we see a question like “Does God change His mind?” this we must put it in proper perspective. The challenge is not to get side tracked (or blindsided) by the question. In order to answer this it’s advantageous for us to look at the qualities of God, who God is, before we make any judgments or assumptions. After all, the second commandment demands that we get our ideas about God from him (from His Word), not from our own minds. (Exodus 20:4-6; Deuteronomy 5:8-10)

The Qualities of God

What are God’s Qualities?

He is...a spirit	John 1:18
a person	Exodus 3:14
great (infinite)	Psalm 9
glorious	Revelation 1:17
eternal	1 Kings 8:27
all powerful and sovereign	Ephesians 1:11
all-wise (omniscient)	Hebrews 4:13
faithful	Lamentations 3:19-24
truthful	Titus 1:2
holy	Isaiah 6:1-7
just (righteous)	Daniel 9:1-19
loving and gracious	John 4:7-12
merciful	Matthew 9:36
generous (good)	James 1:16-18
long-suffering	Numbers 14:18

And our topic for today...

Unchanging (Immutable)

**Mal 3:6-7; Ps 102:26-27;
Heb 13:8 ; Jas 1:17**

God's Immutability

Defining the Term

Since God is perfect; he does not change in his character, purposes and promises. Immutability is dynamic not static.

Scriptural Proof: but remember Context, Context, Context!

Malachi 3:6 "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed

Psalm 102:26 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. 27 But you remain the same, and your years will never end.

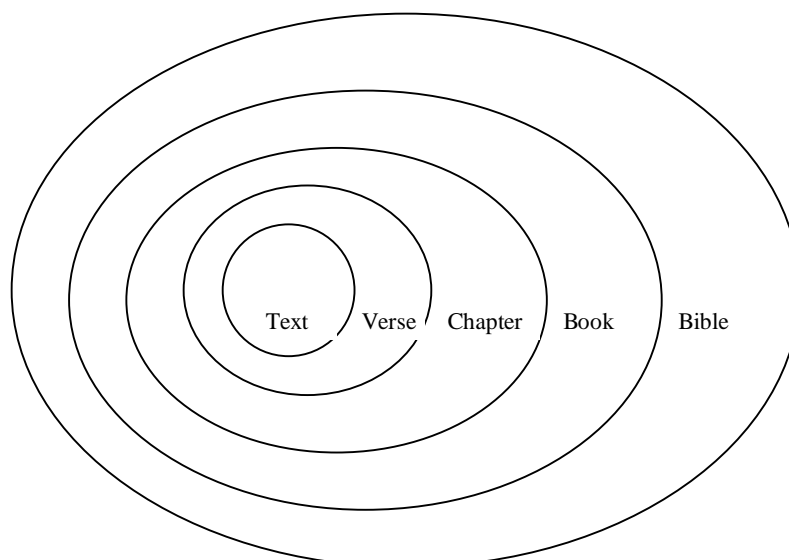
Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

1 Samuel 15:29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Proof-Texting makes context go "poof" and obscures the truth

Enlarging the Circle of Biblical Understanding



Adapted from Grant Osbourne's Hermeneutical Spiral

So What's The Controversy?

Did I just Read That?

Openness of God Debate and the Book by the same name –Clark Pinnock et. al.
The following are examples of verses in which God **seems** to change His mind:

Genesis 6:6 The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain.

Jonah 3:9 Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish." **10** When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he had compassion and did not bring upon them the destruction he had threatened.

Jonah 4:2 He prayed to the LORD, "O LORD, is this not what I said when I was still at home? That is why I was so quick to flee to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity.

*This is why context is so important. Remember the enlarging circles.

Without context, this looks like God makes mistakes, cannot make up his mind, and depends upon human action before he acts, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

These passages can be explained in three ways:

1. **Some are anthropomorphisms** (like the Genesis passage above)
He is the life of the world, especially of Israel, His chosen people. To bring out this truth *anthropomorphisms* are employed. God comes and goes, reveals Himself and hides Himself. He repents (Gen 6:6; 1 Sam 15:11; Am 7:3; Joel 2:13); He becomes angry (Nu 11:1; Ps 106:40); and lays aside His anger (Dt 13:17; Hos 14:4). He sustains a different relation to the godly and the wicked (Prov 11:20; 12:22). He speaks of himself as waking or rising early yet he doesn't sleep. ***This is God accommodating His language to our limited capacities.*** In short, he speaks our language. This is how much he loves us and wants relationship with his people.

2. **Some are stages in the outworking of God's plan**
When God institutes a change **in the way** He deals with His people, He describes his course of conduct as repenting (termed "grieved" in the NIV translation of Genesis 6:6).

3. Some are God's responses to people's repentance (Jonah passages above)

When His people repent it seems as if they are causing God to act in a certain way. The change may be new to God's people or a surprise to them but its no surprise to God. It's already in His plan; he's known it since the foundation of the world. (cf. Jeremiah 1:5).

Two things cause a man to change his mind and reverse his plans

- 1) lack of foresight to anticipate everything or...
- 2) lack of power to execute them, but...

God is both all knowing and all-powerful.

He cannot be more fully informed or emotionally manipulated so that he alters his mind. He knows the end from the beginning. He's got the view from the finish line.

What Does God's Immutability Mean to Me?

A Change Won't Do You Good

Count On It!

- 1) We can rely on His character, completely.
- 2) He does not change his mind, plan or actions.
- 3) We can depend on Him.

People we know have disappointed us. We may either harden ourselves so that it doesn't hurt stoically building walls of solitude. Perhaps we avoid that person. Some sever the relationship so they cannot hurt them anymore. God will never go back on his word, break the deal, or leave His people on their own. To do so would be to go against his character and he can't do that. **God is able to do all things *that are consistent with his holy nature and will.***

What Does This Mean In Light of Eternity?

It means you can sleep at night.

NIV John 6:37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of

all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Selected Verses on God's Immutability

Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?

1 Samuel 15:29 He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind."

Job 23:13 "But he stands alone, and who can oppose him? He does whatever he pleases.

Psalms 33:11 But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

Psalms 119:89 Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.

Proverbs 19:21 Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails.

Ecclesiastes 3:14 I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him.

Isaiah 31:2 Yet he too is wise and can bring disaster; he does not take back his words. He will rise up against the house of the wicked, against those who help evildoers.

Isaiah 40:28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom.

Romans 11:29 for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

Hebrews 6:17 Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.

Hebrews 6:18 God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged.

James 1:17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

Still Interested in the Topic?

Still Sovereign, Schreiner and Ware Eds.

Attributes of God, A.W. Pink

For a summary of the Openness of God view (very one sided) check out *Openness of God* by Pinnock and others. A good balance to this the Schreiner and Ware book.