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Sermon Preached at Galeed Chapel Brighton by Mr J.K. Popham on
Sunday 21st July 1935

Text Malachi 3 verse 6

*For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not
consumed.*

Malachi was the last of the prophets. After Malachi there was a silence, on the part of God for about four hundred years, before the promised Messiah came. Malachi found the people in a very evil condition, they were not gross idolaters. The seventy years captivity cured that nation, of gross idolatry, but they were living very vicious lives, contemning God, esteeming His service a weariness. I wish that spirit had died, when they died. They spoke against God, and they robbed God. You would not do that, perhaps, you think. It is much easier to rob God, than we think naturally. "Will a man rob God ? Yet ye have robbed me" (verse 8.) When you rebel against some of Gods dealings with you, what do you do ? You rob God. You rob His sovereignty, to do what He will with you. You rob His right to deal with you, according to His wisdom, his justice, and His goodness. The service of God was to this people a weariness, and His table which should have been their life, was to them contemptible. O what a sin, that which was for their good, was contemptible to them.

Perhaps some would say, we would not do that, you may be doing it, you may often have done it. I am sorry I know what it is to do it, but God has cured me of that, more than once in this condition. He sent Malachi to them, to reprove them, also to bring good news to them. His feet were beautiful, because he prophesied to the coming of Christ. Of His forerunner John the Baptist, then of Christ Himself. The text tells us that He is immutable. Immutability is essential to the being of Jehovah. If He could change He would not be God. Think of it, it is a perfection of deity, which, if we are well set down in it, will be often a comfort, a stay to our minds. "I am the Lord" An old declaration, grand, awful, blessed. "I am the Lord" men proclaim themselves, Nebuchadnezzar said "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built." His boasting cost him his throne, and seven years of madness.

When God speaks of Himself, He speaks the truth "I am the Lord." Did you ever hear Him, say that ? The scripture says it, and it is true. Have you found that saying in your hearts, "I am the Lord" as if He should say to you "You are not your own". You are My creature, you are not your own, you are My subject.

You are at My disposal, a very solemn truth, and if it be written in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, we are a blessed people. The sovereignty of God is a grand truth, hated by the natural man. Are not our lips our own, we say. Man says I will go into this city, and dwell there a year, and buy and sell and get gain. he does not ask, whether it be God's will. He says, I will do it, what an offence. "Ye ought to say, (as Gods creatures, and His subjects, it is your duty to say) If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." (James 4 verse 15). For what is your life ? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." (James 4 verse 14).

O if any of you should be like the smoke, which the wind drives away, what an awful thing for you. "I am the Lord", I am Wisdom, I wisdom speak in the gates "at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the doors. Unto you, O men I call; and my voice is to the sons of man." (Proverbs 8 verse 3,4). O ye simple turn in hither. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. (Isaiah 55 verse 1). The Lord says this, preachers can preach it, God says it, may He say it to you and to me. "I am the Lord," omnipotent, can I not do what I will with mine own. Am I not almighty, I raise up one, I put down another. "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing." (Isaiah 40 verse 15). They are altogether vanity, O proud man, you do not know, what God may do in a moment. He may blow upon you. "The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry ? (The very opposite to mans wish,) All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Isaiah 40 verse 6,7,8).

"I am the Lord." The end of all things. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty". (Revelation 1 verse 8). Is this Lord before us, tis a great end. Tis life eternal to know Him. Tis dreadful to be ignorant of Him. I am the Creator, the Lord the creator, He created three places, heaven, earth and hell. Heaven is His habitation, Eternity is His habitation. "I dwell in the high and holy place" (Isaiah 57 verse 15). Some sinners are destined to go there, and live with Him, and be His guests through eternity. Are we among them ? He created the earth and placed men on it. Made a beautiful garden, and put him there, gave him everything conducive to his happiness, and contentment, and the continuance of his happy state, but he fell. We fell then, the third place is hell.

O my hearers hell. Men banish it from their minds, and I should judge, from the little I know of religious literature, that hell is banished from the pages of their works. You can read page after page, and not find the word sin in it, but O sin is real. Hell is made for sinners, a solemn truth. "I am the Truth" Hell is made for sinners, He opens the gate of hell. Hell opens her mouth to receive the ungodly. Heaven what a place.

Heaven is the holy, happy place,
Where sin no more defiles;
Where God unveils His blissful face,
And looks, and loves, and smiles; (850 verse 2 Gadsby's)

Have you got a hope of being there ? a hope that is full of goodness, full of expectation. Blessed hope, blessed man who has it.

"I change not", here is a grand truth. I change not. Let me say at once, what good Erskine wrote, he said

"What thou findest Him at thy best,
He is at thy worst the same".

I change not. He changes in His manner, and He changes in His dealings. Now He smiles, then He frowns, now He blesses, then He seems to curse, now He visits, then He adjourns His visits, and seems to go. But He is the same, His immutability to Israel is here set forth "Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." There are only two things that can consume a sinner, his sins, and God's curse. These shall not consume a sinner, shall not consume Zion, for her sin is pardoned, and the curse fell on Christ, therefore cannot fall on her.

Dear friends, let us look a little, at this great truth. Israel at this time was in a dreadful condition, living viciously, contemning God, while professing His name. Replying against Him, when He said "Will a man rob God ? " They said, wherein have we robbed Thee. O the impudence of sin, the presumption of sin, wherein have we robbed Thee. You robbed Him of His right, when you said "What will it profit me, if I pray unto God," For His right is the worship of His creature. He secures that right, by grace given to His elect people. O but look at his condition, do you know anything about it, distant, presumptuous, contemning God, asking wrong questions, preening themselves on their goodness, and contemning Him, from whom their good things come. What did He do ? He did what He still does to His people. First, to reprove them, His immutability is in that. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten:" (Revelation 3 verse 19).

If you are not chastened, if you never are chastened, it is because God does not love you. Mind that "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent." God's chastening is appointed, I mean that it falls, where sin has been committed, where backsliding is. Chastening is of two kinds, first in providence. If you think you will pay your wages into a bag, and keep them, God may make holes in that bag. He says so in His word. Providence is often very pointed, and then He gives, eyes to see, and a heart to feel, conscience to smart.

His chastening, therefore, prize,
The privilege of a saint:
Their hearts are hard, who that despise,
And theirs too weak who faint. (872 verse 6 Gadsby's)

O we ought to thank God for chastening, and I believe every saint will thank Him in time.

The lash is steeped He on thee lays,
And softened in His blood. (871 verse 4 Gadsbys)

O it is a great proof of God's immutability. Immutable love changes many times in manner, and in method. Try not, O afflicted saint, to judge God by His manner. To judge His heart by His dealings with you, for His heart is made of love, it is love, and love moves Him. A gracious God to lay on the rod. The rod is for the fools back, the stocks are for the prodigals feet, a frown is for one, who has despised God in any way. So that is one way, in which the immutability of God, in His grace and love is known, in His holy and wise providence, in chastening.

The second way in which God chastens His people, is by speaking to their hearts, and consciences. He appealed of old, to His people and said, "O my people, what have I done unto thee ? and wherein have I wearied thee ? testify against me". (Micah 6 verse 3). If ever God says that to any of you, it will soften your heart, I know it, for He said it to me "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel ? a land of darkness ? wherefore say My people, We are Lords; we will come no more unto Thee". (Jeremiah 2 verse 31). God says that, O the condescension of the love, the wonder, that the Almighty, whom we have spoken against, should condescend to appeal to us. It is because He cannot change His love, cannot alter His mind, cannot go back on His purpose. Great is this, when God chastens a sinner, when he goes mourning without the sun, and does not for a time understand, that this flows from the immutability of God. "I change not". I eternally meant to save you, I eternally decreed to bless you, I gave you in eternity to My Son, to redeem you.

And from all that, I cannot go back. "I change not". O bless God for this immutability, in chastening. Then His immutability is known, by His renewed visits. We have procured His absence, yes, and He is absent today from the churches, in respect of mighty operations, and things are not today as they were fifty years ago. And my memory regarding the church of God, goes back upwards of seventy years, when He brought me among His people. And O the difference, the change that has come, I have seen, causes die, and causes that were once flourishing, in my spiritual youth, chapels that were crowded, now empty, closed. God does not change, He comes to poor people, even today, though things are as they are, so evil, He comes to them. Comes to this poor man and says "I have loved thee with an everlasting love:" (Jeremiah 31 verse 3). I drew them with the cords of a man, and with bands of love:." (Hosea 11 verse 4). Return unto Me, and I will return unto you. So he speak because He changes not. He comes to one in captivity, and gives him to understand by the scripture, as Daniel understood by reading Jeremiah. He comes by some scripture, and says "now the captivity is to end, return unto me."

O the sweetness of this, and to think of it, seventy years away from their land, from their privileges, from their priests office, away from all the accepted sacrifices, and now God comes, and says return, And so He works in surprise, He gives Ezra a heart to return, and the thousands who went with him. So He comes to a sinner, and says return. Then the soul says, by faith, "Return unto thy rest O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee." (Psalm 116 verse 7). O you may be at a great distance from Him now, poor soul, but His immutable love, will say to you "Return to Me, I will return to you. Call upon Me, Draw nigh unto Me, I will draw nigh to you." This is the blessed order of the scripture, and it is the order God maintains in the hearts of His people. Yes He visits sinners still. They get a visit sometimes in their rooms, alone on their beds. They get a visit, it may be, in the ministry, I wish it were often here, they get a visit in the scripture, when reading the word of the living God. Some passage with which they have been familiar for many years perhaps, is so opened to them and applied, that they are ready to say I never saw this word before. God opens their eyes to see it, quickens their heart to feel it, puts it there with His own power. "I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed". God does not consume His people, and if He will not consume them, who shall ? What can do it, think of it, it is worth your attention. Therefore though you are so vile, though you have behaved so basely, though you have treated Him so wickedly, you are not consumed. Sin shall not consume you, now one says, that is just the thing that is consuming me, it is always with me. It goes to bed with me, it keeps me awake sometimes, it used to with me.

It goes to my room with me, it goes to my table with me. I am ungrateful, I am hard, I am fretful, a letter irritates me, and I have no fear of God, sin is consuming, not quiet. If you belong to God, it won't consume you, there are two things that will prevent it consuming you. The first is the power of God, "Kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1 verse 5). The other is the holy fear of God, though at a low ebb, it will rise, it will speak for God, It will say, return to Him. Rebellious nature says "I will go and return to my first husband; for then it was better with me than now." (Hosea 2 verse 7). But the fear of the Lord will prevent it. Sin shall not consume it. One may say, but have you a scripture to warrant that statement, Yes this is it, listen if you can to our distraction. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6 verse 14). The law cannot stop sin from consuming, the law can do nothing but curse for sin, and kill for sin, but ye are not under the law. God has delivered you from the law. Sinai can only terrify because there is the law, but you are not there. He will come to Mount Zion, Oh what a wonder. Here is a poor sinner, he says I am undone, I am afraid of apostasy, there is every thing to lead me to apostasy, everything to turn my back on God. The gospel says, that sin mourned, confessed and fled from, by you, in the Spirit, that sin, shall not have dominion.

Tis very difficult when you are in a conflict, to make distinctions, which when realised are comforting, for instance. That sin cannot be said to have dominion over you, which you are resisting, and the thief comes and steals something. You say, I resist him as long as I can, then you are not consenting, but it is very difficult. I know it well myself, to make distinctions, when we are in conflict, a kind of hurried confession in the mind. Well you are not consumed by sin. Think of it, a great thing that, why I have been fearing being consumed by my sins now for many years, and yet pray that may not happen, and I believe at times it never will.

You are not consumed by affliction, God afflicted this people, they were so wicked, so vicious in their lives at this time, that God sent Malachi to them, that he reprov'd them very sharply, and said He would be a swift witness against them, and he was, yet He did not consume them by afflicting them. Afflictions shall not consume a child of God, no it helps him. God makes an affliction like a wind in the back, helping the poor creature toward God Himself, toward His rest. Some of you know what I mean, affliction has helped you, has it not. It has driven you to God, it helped you to confess, it helped you to mourn, and caused you to confess and mourn before God.

It helped you to fly to the throne of God's heavenly grace, so affliction shall not consume you. Nor shall the devil consume you, he seeks to do it. The Apostle Peter says "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" (1 Peter 5 verse 8). He can devour none, if God forbids him. The devil could only touch Job, by God's permission, first his substance, then his body. There was a limit, his life must not be touched. You may say with Job, of affliction, that it increaseth. You may say again, with him, "I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction". (Job 10 verse 15). You may again say, that you are going to that land of darkness, where there is no order, and yet there comes a light into your heart, a little movement in your soul. The devil is defeated, you are not consumed. The reason is not in yourself, it is not even in your exercises. It is in the immutability of Jehovah, here is a strong place.

Here is a real rest, when God gives a soul to say, I believe it, and fly to it. A real rest O believer, troubled, weak, tossed about, and often, perhaps ready to say in your heart, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God" (Isaiah 40 verse 27). He takes no notice of me, as one of old felt "And when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer." (Lamentations 3 verse 8). That was a mistake, every saint is ready to conclude, that God does not hear him, because immediate relief does not come. O but listen to what God says "I am the Lord I change not". I do not take you in hand to let you go, I do not call you to withdraw that call. I do not bless you to blot out that blessing. I do not give you a promise of heaven, for that promise to fail. I am the Lord.

God said of His Son Jesus Christ, when He gave Him the work of saving His people to do, "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged". (Isaiah 42 verse 4). "Hast thou not known ? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary ?" (Isaiah 40 verse 28). He rests in His love, He rests in His purpose, He rests in His Son, therefore the word is "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem," (Isaiah 40 verses 1 & 2). O, He says to His servant, now go with your beautiful feet, and proclaim this great goodness, that God has designed to give, and will give because, He is strong and fainteth not, will give because He cannot change.

Well dear friends here is a ground for your faith. God, when He promised Abraham, to make of him a great nation, and that all nations of the earth, should be blessed in him. Showed the immutability of that promise, by interposing Himself with an oath, as if the promise were not enough.

As if because of the long delay, in fulfilling the word of promise, Abraham should faint altogether, he said, "By myself I have sworn, saith the Lord for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven," (Genesis 22 verses 16 & 17). "For when God made promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." (Hebrews 6 verse 13). He confirmed His promise with an oath, we cannot rightly conceive the condescending love, He says "That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus," (Hebrews 6 verses 18 to 20). O wavering, fickle, failing, weak sinner, cast an anchor here. Cast your anchor here, it will hold, the ground will hold it. You cannot hold the ground, but the ground will hold your anchor.

Bless God for His mercy in this "I am the Lord, I change not, your baseness shall not move my decree. Your wickedness shall not dry up the eternal fountain, for I am love.

Amen.