

God Unchangeable: a Prayer in Affliction

We opened this year at Cornerstone with Psalm 102, a psalm which, when I read it, seemed as if I had never read it before. How had I missed these riches, these glories? We are poor readers, certainly – poorer yet in our hearts that we can scan these words so many times and not be struck with wonder, and our mouths opened in praise! So I want to put it before us today, that God may glorified, and honored by our prayers.

This psalm is entitled, not by reference to a precise point in history, nor by its author, nor its intended use in the liturgy of the nation of Israel, but as “A Prayer of the Afflicted when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the LORD.” To describe it before reading it, I cannot do better than to quote Spurgeon: “In the first part of the Psalm, Ps 102:1-11, the moaning monopolizes every verse, the lamentation is unceasing, sorrow rules the hour. The second portion, from Ps 102:12-28, has a vision of better things, a view of the gracious Lord, and his eternal existence, and care for his people, and therefore it is interspersed with sunlight as well as shaded by the cloud, and it ends up right gloriously with calm confidence for the future, and sweet restfulness in the Lord. The whole composition may be compared to a day which, opening with wind and rain, clears up at noon and is warm with the sun, continues fine, with intervening showers, and finally closes with a brilliant sunset.” Let us now hear the psalm, and see that day unfold:

¹ Hear my prayer, O LORD!

And let my cry for help come to You.

² Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress;

Incline Your ear to me;

In the day when I call answer me quickly.

³ For my days have been consumed in smoke,

And my bones have been scorched like a hearth.

⁴ My heart has been smitten like grass and has withered away,

Indeed, I forgot to eat my bread.

⁵ Because of the loudness of my groaning

My bones cling to my flesh.

⁶ I resemble a pelican of the wilderness;

I have become like an owl of the waste places.

⁷ I lie awake,

I have become like a lonely bird on a housetop.

⁸ My enemies have reproached me all day long;

Those who deride me have used my *name* as a curse.

⁹ For I have eaten ashes like bread

And mingled my drink with weeping

¹⁰ Because of Your indignation and Your wrath,

For You have lifted me up and cast me away.

¹¹ My days are like a lengthened shadow,

And I wither away like grass.

- ¹² But You, O LORD, abide forever,
 And Your name to all generations.
- ¹³ You will arise *and* have compassion on Zion;
 For it is time to be gracious to her,
 For the appointed time has come.
- ¹⁴ Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones
 And feel pity for her dust.
- ¹⁵ So the nations will fear the name of the LORD
 And all the kings of the earth Your glory.
- ¹⁶ For the LORD has built up Zion;
 He has appeared in His glory.
- ¹⁷ He has regarded the prayer of the destitute
 And has not despised their prayer.
- ¹⁸ This will be written for the generation to come,
 That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.
- ¹⁹ For He looked down from His holy height;
 From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth,
- ²⁰ To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
 To set free those who were doomed to death,
- ²¹ That *men* may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion
 And His praise in Jerusalem,
- ²² When the peoples are gathered together,
 And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.
- ²³ He has weakened my strength in the way;
 He has shortened my days.
- ²⁴ I say, “O my God, do not take me away in the midst of my days,
 Your years are throughout all generations.
- ²⁵ “Of old You founded the earth,
 And the heavens are the work of Your hands.
- ²⁶ “Even they will perish, but You endure;
 And all of them will wear out like a garment;
 Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.
- ²⁷ “But You are the same,
 And Your years will not come to an end.
- ²⁸ “The children of Your servants will continue,
 And their descendants will be established before You.”

[Ps. 102]

“Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” - as did this prayerful man in affliction, as a benefit for all His church when afflicted, that His people might go to their heavenly Father in prayer, and not without substance for their prayers, but to plead His very nature, rest on His very promises, and so glorify God their Rock. The Holy Spirit knows our weakness, knowing that we do not know how to pray as we ought, and so here intercedes for us, and here not with groanings too deep for words, but with words which need no interpreting, so that the church may be edified (2 Peter 1:21; Rom. 8:26; 1 Cor. 14:5). Let us pray in gratitude for this provision. [Prayer.]

Introduction: the Circumstance (v 1-11, 17,20, 23-24a).

The psalmist is afflicted; he is faint. He bears in his body the marks of this affliction, whether it be of an ailment directly, some wasting disease, or whether it be the frame of his mind and of his heart doing their work upon his body. He is deprived of sleep, he is deprived of food – so troubled is he in mind that he forgets his daily bread, and so is emaciated, skin and bones; he would look to us as if he were in a concentration camp. What food he has is of no help to him: ashes for bread, which will not satisfy his hunger, and the salt of tears for drink, which will not quench his thirst, but only make it worse. Sleeplessness would have left its marks upon his face, his eyes, as it does for any of us. His grief causes him to separate himself from others, to seek solitude, or else his affliction forces loneliness upon him, keeping others at a distance; he likens himself to a hideous bird that inhabits waste places, or like a lonely bird on a housetop.

But he is not entirely alone; after all, he has his enemies! Whether they are close at hand, or at a distance, yet he knows them well enough to know their works: he endures their reproach all day long. They use his name as a *curse*, which is a hard thing to bear; or, else (as the older translations read), these enemies have *taken an oath* against him, as certain Jews took an oath that they would kill the apostle Paul. Words, at the very least, are aimed against the psalmist, and perhaps weapons, blunt or sharp, as well. Whether all this threat has caused his physical affliction, or the weakness in body was taken as an opportunity for his enemies to pounce – it matters not. He is afflicted from within and from without, and in that mess the seeming vanity of his life is before him – his days are consumed in smoke, by a burning away – or else, like smoke, his life is vanishing, as if blown away and dispersed by the wind. His days are like a lengthening shadow.

He is *destitute*: he is a man who is *withering*. Mow the lawn low, scalp the grass, and then follow that by hot, dry days, and the grass will wither and die. So it is with the heart of the psalmist: his strength has been weakened, and he sees that his days have been shortened, and perceives that he is doomed to die; he fears that he is to be taken away in the midst of his years, in mid-course. He sees this is not apart from God's rule of things.

¹⁰ Because of Your indignation and Your wrath,
For You have lifted me up and cast me away.

The psalmist finds himself like pottery that is raised up to be smashed against the stones, or a ship lifted up by a violent swell of the sea to be crashed into the depths. He further declares the LORD's rule over his circumstance when he later says that

²³ He has weakened my strength in the way;
He has shortened my days.

If the reproach of man is bad enough, how much worse when one sees that God has made it so?

Such is the “wind and rain” (as Spurgeon called it) – the wind and the rain of the beginning of this day, the storm and gloom in which this morning breaks. But it is not entirely without light; it is morning, and the sun has risen. We see that in the very first verses:

¹ Hear my prayer, O LORD!
And let my cry for help come to You.

² Do not hide Your face from me in the day of my distress;
Incline Your ear to me;
In the day when I call answer me quickly.

This man, in his affliction, even his god-ordained affliction, knows to pray, and knows to whom to pray, to the LORD, to Yahweh, the great I AM revealed to Moses in the burning bush. He pleads not half-heartedly, not with a double mind, but with urgency he desires a hearing with God, and audience as with a king, to hear both his words (intelligible to us) and his cry (that which is beyond words, or too deep for words). In this distress he desires God not to hide His face – O look down from Your holy height! Gaze upon the earth and see! He pleads that the ear of God would be inclined toward Him, that he would be answered quickly. That this man in distress has yet prayer in his heart for his God in the midst of distress is a good thing indeed, and instructs the church well.

This righteous man has run to the strong tower that is the name of the LORD, and (we would reason) will most certainly be safe (Ps. 18:10). So, in his prayer, in this unhappy circumstance, what will be his plea?

I. Unchangeable: God and His Promises.

His plea, I think, we find beginning in verse 12, continuing as a thread through the verses till it shines most clearly in verse 27.

¹² But You, O LORD, abide forever,
And Your name to all generations.

The Lord is here said to *abide forever*; His name, which signifies His nature, likewise abides, continues or resides with, to all generations. This is emphasized again after the psalmist pleads to the Lord not to take him away in the midst of his years:

²⁴ . . .

Your years are throughout all generations.

The Lord is said to “endure” (v. 26), even while other things wear out, and then in verse 27 it is said:

²⁷ “But You are the same,
And Your years will not come to an end.

That God is eternal, everlasting, is certainly put before us here, but even more that He is unchangeable. “You are the same.” His name – His nature, attributes, character – abides to all generations. As God’s revelation of Himself progresses, we might see more of Him, more names that apply to Him, but there is no *change* of His name – a name once given, that no longer applies. He may change our names (God be praised!) but His name is unchanged. God is unchangeable, immutable.

Now, that all stands is the sharpest contrast with the psalmist’s condition! The psalmist is withering – he is certainly not unchangeable, but is changing, and changing for the worse. He is dying. Not so the Lord, and the psalmist brings that to mind. Do you pray like that? Do you, when weak, tired, bring to mind the fact that the Lord is almighty, that all strength is His? When

faced with unknowns, and are bewildered in your mind, not knowing how to proceed, do you bring to mind that there is nothing that the Lord does not know? When faced with bitter change, do you bring to mind that the Lord suffers no alteration, no change? You would never bring such things to mind if your thoughts never rest upon who God is, and what He is like. If you despise what we call ‘theology’, the knowledge of God, think that it is merely for the pastor, or for academics in seminaries, then when in bitter affliction like the psalmist, when suffering the worst of changes, you will not recall what the psalmist here recalls, what God has revealed about Himself, that He does not change.

The psalmist brings this to mind *without resentment*. It is **not** that in the midst of dreadful change that he recalls God’s unchanging nature, and it grieves him. No: it warms him and encourages him. He loves God, adores God for Who He is, and Who He is without change. Here, in the day that Spurgeon described, the sun breaks through the clouds and the rain and wind cease. Noon has come.

But God’s unchanging nature is not presented here as a mere bare fact. The cheer that the psalmist receives from considering this is not merely “Well, I’m glad something around here doesn’t change!” No – it is tied to his promises for His people.

¹² But You, O LORD, abide forever,
And Your name to all generations. [God unchanging: and then immediately:]

¹³ You will arise *and* have compassion on Zion;
For it is time to be gracious to her,
For the appointed time has come.

Immediately he brings this glorious truth about God to bear on the situation, and encourages his soul with the confident assurance, with the faith that God will arise, God will have compassion upon Zion, upon Jerusalem. How this relates to psalmist’s condition I will address in a minute – but for now it is sufficient to see how the psalmist does not merely contrast his situation with God’s nature, but rather God’s everlasting nature is *applied* to the situation in the light of the promises that God has made. This logic is found in many places in Scripture. In Habakkuk, after the Lord has answered the prophet’s despair about the decay he sees in the nation of Judah with news of the coming conquest by the Babylonians, the prophet cries out:

¹² Are You not from everlasting,
O Lord, my God, my Holy One?
We will not die.

[Hab. 1:12a]

How does God being from everlasting relate to “We will not die”? What does the one have to do with the other? Is the prophet here merely confused? Is he just not thinking straight? But we have in Malachi the same thought, clearly as a word from God to His people:

For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

[Mal. 3:6]

Again, the same thought. The Lord does not change, and that says something about what God’s chosen people experience. What binds these two together? The answer we find in the book of Numbers, in what Balaam says:

“God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should repent;
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?

[Numbers 23:19]

Here we can see what binds the two together: the unchanging God has said that He will do certain things, and He will do them . He has made promises to Abraham, and He will see to it. He made promises to the people of Israel from the mouth of Moses, regarding His presence and that He would neither leave them nor forsake them (Deut. 31:6,8), and promises regarding restoration were they to depart from His ways and He disciplined them with captivity (Deut. 30), promises repeated through Solomon in prayer when the temple was built.

Now, what has all this to do with the psalmist’s condition, though? The psalmist is afflicted greatly in body and in mind, and oppressed by enemies, and then the comfort he gains has to do with Jerusalem. How do the two relate? To answer this, let us think about what is likely implied about Jerusalem.

¹³ You will arise *and* have compassion on Zion;
For it is time to be gracious to her,
For the appointed time has come.

¹⁴ Surely Your servants find pleasure in her stones
And feel pity for [*or favor, as older versions have it*] her dust.

The situation best matches the condition of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity – perhaps in the time of the captivity, or perhaps in the time of the rebuilding of Jerusalem. There is the dust of Jerusalem; there is an appointed time. Some commentators ascribe this psalm to that time and perhaps even to someone like Daniel, or Nehemiah. Recall how, in Daniel chapter 9, Daniel “observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years [*an appointed time*]. So [says Daniel] I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes.” (Daniel 9:2-3). Or we can recall how Nehemiah is told that “The remnant there in the province who survived the captivity are in great distress and reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is broken down and its gates are burned with fire.’ When I heard these words [*writes Nehemiah*], I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven.” Here is a man who favored the dust of Jerusalem, pitied Zion. I confess that the logic of the Psalm here made no sense to me until I placed the psalm at this time, or at least written as a provision especially for this time.

Now, how does that relate to the psalmist’s condition? It could be that his condition *is* the nation’s condition; he is one of the ones so oppressed, perhaps a leader or representative of those so oppressed (think of Nehemiah facing Tobiah and Sanballat). In this case, his withering is the nation’s withering. It could be that he sees in the nation’s condition a fitting symbol for his own condition; he reminds himself of the larger picture of the suffering of God’s people of which he is a part. A Christian may be persecuted but is reminded that the church is promised such. It could be that the psalmist has poetically put before us the condition of the nation in the figure of an individual. There are probably other possibilities. It is hard to be dogmatic here, and that is, in God’s providence, a good thing, because it allows the church of all time and all its members to

apply the balm of these words to their condition, whether they be in solitary suffering or persecution as a body.

Regardless, the comforting and heartening truth that is put before us here is this: these are unchangeable, God and the promises He has made. Brothers, do you put that before yourselves in the midst of change for the worst? In the midst of personal withering, do you put before you God unchanging, His promises unchanging and sure to be acted upon? When you see (as we see now) the church withered, oppressed most bitterly in far off lands, but surely and steadily becoming more oppressed here in this land, do you cheer yourself with this sure, certain assurance: that God is unchanging, His promises likewise? That there are appointed times and still those who feel pity for the ruin of the church? I encourage us, you and me, to do so.

II. Unchangeable: God's Eternal Purposes.

Now, what so greatly affected me when I encountered this psalm earlier this year (encountered it again, but seemingly for the first time) were these verses:

¹⁵ So the nations will fear the name of the LORD

And all the kings of the earth Your glory.

¹⁶ For the LORD has built up Zion;

He has appeared in His glory.

¹⁷ He has regarded the prayer of the destitute

And has not despised their prayer.

¹⁸ This will be written for the generation to come,

That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

¹⁹ For He looked down from His holy height;

From heaven the LORD gazed upon the earth,

²⁰ To hear the groaning of the prisoner,

To set free those who were doomed to death,

²¹ That *men* may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion

And His praise in Jerusalem,

²² When the peoples are gathered together,

And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

The psalmist's eyes are opened to a vast view of what the Lord will accomplish in due time. How did he get from his poor, withering condition to a vision of the coming of the Gentiles to worship the one, true Living God? "So the nations will fear the name of the LORD, / And all the kings of the earth Your glory." What has opened the psalmist's eyes to these things? In the midst of his suffering, the psalmist recalls *God's unchanging eternal purposes*.

What is going on is much larger than the psalmist's individual suffering. Brothers, when we suffer, there is a much larger picture to behold. God's eternal purposes are being worked out. I know that this is largely just restating the previous point, that God's promises are unchanging. Yes, but see the scope of what is put in view here, and I think it warrants a second point: a restatement in large, bold letters! His eternal purposes are unchanging. Not just: Jerusalem will be rebuilt. But: the Gentiles will come. As was promised to Abraham: "And in you all the families

of the earth will be blessed.” (Gen. 12:3) One more step toward the crushing of the head of the vile serpent by the seed of the woman. So, in the midst of individual suffering, it is good to have our thoughts expanded to others, the suffering they may experience as well (Jerusalem being in ruins) but also the good that may come to many (the nations will fear the name of the LORD).

But it is larger still than that! The LORD will build up Zion; He will appear in glory. He will have regard for the prayer of the destitute, He will not despise their prayers! The verb tenses here in verses 16 and 17 are varied between translations: some in past tense, some in present tense, some in future tense. This is a sign of great certainty, not of confusion: we have here what I like to call a prophetic present tense: a thing which, though future and yet to be, is so certain that one may speak of it as a present reality, or even as a thing already accomplished. The more the psalmist’s eyes are opened wide, the greater his assurance. The clouds of this dark day are dispersing. There may yet be showers in the afternoon, scattered, isolated, but the storm is breaking. God’s eternal purposes are being opened before the psalmist and before us: God will be glorified. God has regard for the prayers of the destitute, does not despise them, but answers them, and to what end?

¹⁸ This will be written for the generation to come,
That a people yet to be created may praise the LORD.

That the LORD may be praised. That God may be worshipped. That is what this is all tending to: the glory of God in the worship of His people, Jew and Gentile. Again, in verses 19 and following, He looks down from His holy height. From heaven He gazes upon the earth – to do what?

²⁰ To hear the groaning of the prisoner,
To set free those who were doomed to death,

And to what end? For what chief purpose?

²¹ That *men* may tell of the name of the LORD in Zion
And His praise in Jerusalem,

²² When the peoples are gathered together,
And the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

To worship God, to serve Him. The psalmist’s eyes are opened, his mind reminded, that this is all primarily about God. And the wondrous thing, gracious and full of lovingkindness, is that the good He has stored up for us, which by His unchanging promises He will make sure to be granted for us, is all tied up in His purposes to glorify Himself, for it shows forth His faithfulness and His goodness, and even more that I will come to later.

How did the psalmist come to see this, the coming of the Gentiles to the Lord at this time? The answer depends upon when the psalm was written. If (as some think) it were David, suffering at the hands of his son, Absalom, and seeing in that a precursor to the ruin of Jerusalem that is to come, yet prophetically envisioning the time of her rebuilding, - well, then, he sees it prophetically. If it is written at the time of Jerusalem’s ruin, then he would likely see it by remembering what the prophets had already announced. Isaiah was one of early prophets, as was Micah, and yet each spoke these words, early on:

² Now it will come about that
In the last days

The mountain of the house of the Lord
Will be established as the chief of the mountains,
And will be raised above the hills;
And all the nations will stream to it.
³ And many peoples will come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us concerning His ways
And that we may walk in His paths.”
For the law will go forth from Zion
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

[Is. 2:2-3]

Or, specifically as regards the Servant, Christ, God says in Isaiah:

⁶ He says, “It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel;
I will also make You a light of the nations
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

[Is. 49:6]

It really doesn't matter whether it is by recollection to the psalmist, or by a fresh revealing to the prophet-psalmist. Either way it is a work of the Holy Spirit, in His revealing, or in His reminding a man, as it were, of the words of Christ. The triune God is here glorified: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

But it grows yet larger than all this!

²⁵ “Of old You founded the earth,
And the heavens are the work of Your hands.

²⁶ “Even they will perish, but You endure;
And all of them will wear out like a garment;
Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

In the midst of his suffering, this man looks forward to the new heavens and the new earth! If the psalmist is withering, if this prisoner is groaning, all of creation is groaning as well, he sees, and it is going to be changed by God unchangeable, set free from slavery to corruption. He can here “consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that will be revealed to us.” (Rom. 8:18) Here is the glorious sunset of this day that Spurgeon described, and it speaks of an everlasting Dawn. How were his eyes opened to this? Again, either by reminder or by fresh revelation; either way the Holy Spirit was working. I favor that it is by reminder of the things written (again) in Isaiah:

¹⁷ “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.

¹⁸ “But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create;
For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing
And her people for gladness.

[Is. 65:17-18]

And many words follow which show forth the glories of that new creation. John, in the book of Revelation, was not the first to witness such things; he was harkening back to, yet further opening,

what had been revealed to Isaiah hundreds of years before. And what this psalmist. In the last verses of Isaiah, he writes:

²² “For just as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I make will endure before Me,” declares the Lord,
“So your offspring and your name will endure.”

[Is. 66:22]

Compare those words with the end of this psalm:

²⁸ “The children of Your servants will continue,
And their descendants will be established before You.”

In affliction, be reminded of God’s eternal purposes: His glorifying of Himself, and His promise of a new heavens and a new earth, where He will dwell with His people, and He will be their God. These eternal purposes are unchanging.

III. Unchangeable: Jesus Christ.

But there is even holier ground to be tread upon in this psalm, to encourage the Christian soul yet more in its affliction. Hear these verses again:

¹⁰ And
“YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH,
AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;
¹¹ THEY WILL PERISH, BUT YOU REMAIN;
AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD LIKE A GARMENT,
¹² AND LIKE A MANTLE YOU WILL ROLL THEM UP;
LIKE A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED.
BUT YOU ARE THE SAME,
AND YOUR YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END.”

[Heb. 1:10-12]

I was reading, not from Ps. 102 directly, but from the quotation of it in the first chapter of Hebrews, verses 10 – 12. What use the writer of Hebrews made of this verse is astonishing and should thrill us. He has been speaking of the Son of God, of His role in creation and providence, His deity, and of what was accomplished in His death and resurrection, and of His ascension, all of which conspire to show the Son’s all-surpassing excellence. So in contrasting what is said of angels with what is said of the Son, the writer says that this is spoken of the Son (v. 8). These verses are speaking about Christ. Of Christ it is said that He made the heavens and earth, and of Christ it is said that even when the Creation perishes, He will remain. *Jesus Christ: unchangeable*. This is a sure comfort and prayer in affliction. Jesus Christ, unchangeable.

This is astonishing, and should leave us breathless. Much of what the writer of Hebrews quotes is clearly Messianic: Ps. 2, Ps. 45, Ps. 110, the promises made to David regarding his house. But why would the writer of Hebrews say so boldly that *these* verses from Ps. 102 are ‘said of the Son’? What is there in the psalm that would indicate that it was so? Here I agree with wholeheartedly the words of an older writer that Spurgeon quotes: “I doubt whether, without apostolic teaching, any of us would have had the boldness to understand [this psalm].” Amen! That these words are written ‘of the Son’ is asserted because it has been revealed to the apostle

writing the words. It may be reminder: when Christ, after the Resurrection, opened up the disciples' minds to all that the Law and the Prophets said regarding Him, these verses may have been put before them. I don't know. But if it weren't for an apostle saying so, would we have sanely come this psalm and said, these verses speak of Jesus?

Not that it is unreasonable. The writer had already said of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: "through whom also He made the world." (Heb. 1:2b) And God as creator us spoken of in these verses:

"YOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH,
AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF YOUR HANDS;"

And so, it is of Christ, and so we have before us, Jesus Christ, unchangeable. And to have this psalm put before his readers serves the writer of Hebrews greatly, for unchangeableness is considered again in the book to encourage us in hope - sure, certain hope, an anchor for the soul:

¹⁷In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the *unchangeableness* of His purpose, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two *unchangeable* things in which it is impossible for God to lie [which I take to be His nature and His promise], we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, ²⁰where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

[Heb. 6:17-20; emphases mine]

The writer toward the end of his epistle puts before us the reminder that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Heb. 13:8) And this psalm tells us that of Christ as well:

²⁷ "But You are the same,
And Your years will not come to an end.

In this we find confidence, whether we are in affliction, or whether we are persevering in love of the brethren, hospitality, remembering the persecuted church, honoring marriage as God has made it, or making sure that we trust, not in riches, but in God and His promises (Heb. 13:1-5).

⁵ . . . for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"
⁶ so that we confidently say,

"THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID.
WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

[Heb. 13:5b-6; emphases mine]

So, how is it that His gracious goodness to us that is promised is tied up with God's purpose to glorify Himself, as is His right and is so fitting? Yes, in the manifestation of His faithfulness and lovingkindness, but also by our *union* with Christ Jesus, unchangeable. Being in Christ Jesus, His good to us and His glory are inextricably tied together.

So in affliction, dear saints of God, remember your unchangeable God, and His unchangeable promises to us, and His unchangeable eternal purposes, and our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

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