

THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD STANDS FOREVER. Psalm 33:11

(The immutability of God, 3rd in a series)

Sermon to the servants of the Most High God at
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God is unchangeable in his purposes and decrees; there is a purpose for everything, and a time for that purpose. (Ecclesiastes Chapter 3). God has determined all that ever was, is, or shall be. All things come to pass according to the counsel of his will, and all his decrees are unchangeable. They are the mountains of brass Zechariah (**Chapter 6**) saw in a vision, from whence proceed the providences of God, and the executioners of them. They are called "mountains" because of their immovableness, and mountains of "brass" to denote their greater firmness and stability. *“And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses; And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grised and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. ... And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both....And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent*

me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.” (Zechariah 6:1-4, 12-13, 15)

Psalm 36:6: *“Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.”*

Hebrews 12:22: *“But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels[.]”*

Isaiah 2:2-3: *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”*

Immutability is expressly spoken of in describing the counsel of God in **Hebrews 6:17:** *“Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath[.]”* The purposes of God are always carried into execution, they are never frustrated. It is not in the power of men and devils to disannul them; whatever devices and counter workings to them may be framed and formed, they are of no avail.

I give you some examples of this doctrine taught in the Bible:

Psalm 33:11: *“The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.”*

Gill: *"By which are meant, not the doctrines of the Gospel, nor the ordinances of it; though these will stand firm, and remain to the end of the world; but the purposes and decrees of God, which are wisely formed in himself, are eternal and unfrustrable, and relate to all things in providence and grace. The Lord does all things according to the counsel of his will in the government of the world, and in the salvation of men: the choice of persons to everlasting life is according to it; and so are their redemption, effectual calling, and glorification[.]"*

Job 23:13: *"But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth."*

Job 34:29: *"When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth his face, who then can behold him? whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only[.]"*

Proverbs 19:21: *"There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand."*

Proverbs 21:30: *"There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD."*

Isaiah 14:24: *"The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand[.]"*

Isaiah 14:26-27: *"This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth: and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"*

Isaiah 43:13: *“Yea, before the day was I am he; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand: I will work, and who shall let it?”*

Isaiah 46:10-11: *“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it.”*

Lamentations 3:37: *“Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?”*

Ezekiel 38:10-23: *“Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil? Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee,*

O Gog, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD.”

Daniel 4:35, 37: *“And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?...Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.”*

Acts 4:27-28: *“For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do*

whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.”

Romans 9:11-14: *“(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid.”*

Ephesians 1:11: *“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will[.]”*

The purposes of God are "within" himself, **Ephesians 1:9:** *“Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself[.]”* And what is in himself, is himself, and he can as soon cease to be as to alter his mind, or change his counsels. They are "eternal", **Ephesians 3:11:** *“According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord[.]”* No new thoughts arise in his mind, no new resolutions are formed in his breast, no new decrees are made by him. His counsels are "of old;" *“O LORD, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.”* (**Isaiah 25:1**) His purposes are called "counsels", because designs wisely formed by men, are with consultation, and upon mature deliberation: and such are the decrees of God. (Lawyers are often referred to as “counsel,” because they counsel people concerning the law and how to apply factual situations to the law; or people seek counsel from them to make the best decision possible for important matters in their lives). They are made with the highest wisdom by him, who is *“wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,”* (**Isaiah 28:29**) and so are unchangeable. And besides,

being "all-knowing" (**1 John 3:20**), he sees and declares the end from the beginning (**Isaiah 46:10**), and nothing unforeseen ever can appear to hinder the execution of his intentions and determinations; which is sometimes the case with men. He is "able" to perform whatever he resolves upon; there is no lack of wisdom, nor of power in him, as often is in men. And he is "faithful" to himself, his purposes and decrees; his "*counsels of old are faithfulness and truth*"; or are truly and faithfully performed. (**Isaiah 25:1**)

The immutability of the decrees of God cannot be disproved by his providences, which are many and various, unsearchable and past finding out (**Job 9:10; Romans 11:33**), and which may seem to differ from, and clash with one another. All the changes in providence, whether with respect to the world in general, or with respect to individuals, are according to his unchangeable will. Job was a remarkable instance of changes in providence, and yet he was fully persuaded of the unchangeable will of God in them, and which he strongly expresses; "*He is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doth; for he performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with him*", **Job 23:13,14**. Nor is it to be disproved by the different declarations of the will of God, what he would have observed and done, in the different dispensations of law and gospel. God, by Moses, ordered the children of Israel, to observe certain laws, rites, and ceremonies, until the time of reformation, and then there was a disannulling of them. The heavens and earth were shaken, that is, the whole Mosaic economy and dispensation, whereby these were removed and laid aside as useless, and other ordinances were fixed in place, to remain until Christ's second coming. The delivery of the one, and the time of their continuance, and the abolition of them, and the settling of the other gospel ordinances to remain to the end of the world, was all according to

the unchangeable will of God. (My citations in support hereof are reduced to this: The Holy Bible).

Nor is prayer any objection to the immutability of the divine will, which is not to be altered by it. For when the mind of God is not towards a people to do them good, it cannot be turned to them by the most fervent and importunate prayers of those who have the greatest interest in him, **Jeremiah 15:1**: *“Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.”* And when he bestows blessings on a praying people, it is not for the sake of their prayers, as if he was inclined and turned by them: but for his own sake, and of his own sovereign will and pleasure. Should it be said, to what purpose then is prayer? I suggest this as an answer: This is the way and means God has appointed, for the communication of the blessings of his goodness to his people. Though he has purposed, provided, and promised them, yet he will be sought unto, to give them to them, and it is their duty and privilege to ask them of him. When they are blessed with a spirit of prayer, it forebodes well, and looks as if God intended to bestow the good things asked; and which should be asked always with submission to the will of God, saying, *“not my will, but thine be done”* (**Luke 22:42**). **Deuteronomy 29:29**: *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”*

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
Hebrews 13:20-21.