

CHANGES

“For I am the Lord, I change not.” Malachi 3:6. We are emphatically told that God does not change. His plan does not change. His laws do not change. His times and seasons do not change; and the end results will not change.

Turn with me now to the 8th chapter of Proverbs, the 22nd through the 32nd verses and hear what our Lord as the Logos has to say: *“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. {23} I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. {24} When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. {25} Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: {26} While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. {27} When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: {28} When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: {29} When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: {30} Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; {31} Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men. {32} Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways.”* This was and is God’s plan. Do we have any doubts that He will accomplish that which He has started? God Himself tells us this in Isaiah 55:11 *“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”*

God’s plan does not change, but it is progressive. We study in Genesis the six creative days: each day was proclaimed “very good.” Very good in the sense of being in accord with God’s perfect laws, but not yet complete. Each creative day progressively accomplished its task, and the next day progressively accomplished more. And all this was proclaimed “very good.” God had not created anything which was not perfect, just incomplete.

If this is correct, where did SIN come from? (1 John 3:8 KJV) tells us *“He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning.”* And (Ezekiel 28:14-16 KJV) *Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. {15} Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. {16} By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with*

violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire.” And Romans 5:12 tells us *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”*

So now we apparently have a problem. It seems that either God is the author of sin, or that God had to change his plans because of sin. We have a Scripture in (1 Corinthians 14:33 KJV) which tells us *“For God is not the author of confusion”* and again, (Malachi 3:6 KJV) *“For I am the LORD, I change not.”*

What changed? Review again the 15th verse of Ezekiel 28 *“Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, **till iniquity was found in thee.**”* Satan is the author of sin. Did God then have to change his plan to accommodate sin? Certainly not! We are comforted with Scriptures to this effect: (Isaiah 46:9-10 KJV) *Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, {10} 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:* God, knowing the end from the beginning, had made within His plan the use of sin so that men and angels might see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and desire to do righteously.

Man changed. (Genesis 1:27 KJV) tells us that *“So God created man in his own image.”* God did not create a sinful creature, but one in His own image, perfect. It was man, through the influence of Satan, who changed and became a fallen, sinful creature. And man must change again in the millennial age to regain his individual perfection, this through the merit and influence of Christ. And there is now that relatively select few who are now being changed into the image of Christ.

But how do these changing individuals fit into God’s unchanging plan, since we are assured that God does not coerce men into obedience, and individuals are not predestined? We know that all the features of God’s plan are predestined, the chronology, the various events which transpire; but not the individuals involved (with few exceptions outlined in the Scriptures).

We read the Scriptural account in genesis of the six creative days. In each one God decreed a part of His plan and it was carried out. It was not until man was created that a commandment was given and the possibility of breaking that

commandment existed. God commanded that man eat of all the trees except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And for the first time, a consequence was given for disobeying God. This was the first of the many, many commandments and consequences that permeate the Scriptures. I like to refer to them as if-then statements: **if** you do right **then** you will be blessed, **if** you do wrong, **then** you will be punished. Many of the examples of these do not contain the words **if** and **then** but they do contain the statements of contingencies.

Let us look at just a few of these examples: *(Genesis 12:1-3 KJV) Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: {2} And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: {3} And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.* This contained three commands and three consequences – the command to go to another land, the consequence of being blessed by doing so; the command to all others to bless Abram and his nation and the consequences of being blessed by doing so; and the command to all others to not curse Abram and his nation with the consequence of being cursed in doing so.

Another example: In Exodus 19:5 and 6, Israel is in the Sinai just prior to receiving the Ten Commandments. God says, “*Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: {6} And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.*” This is a very strong if-then statement.

Another example: (1 Samuel 12:14-15 KJV) Samuel is addressing Israel: “**If** ye will fear the LORD, and serve him, and obey his voice, and not rebel against the commandment of the LORD, **then** shall both ye and also the king that reigneth over you continue following the LORD your God: {15} But **if** ye will not obey the voice of the LORD, but rebel against the commandment of the LORD, **then** shall the hand of the LORD be against you, as *it was* against your fathers.”

Let us skip now to the New Testament for our next example. (John 15:12-14 KJV) “*This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. {13} Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. {14} Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*” **If** you do as I command, love one another, **then** you are my friend.

One last example, (2 Timothy 2:12 KJV) ***“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”***

We have seen that God has provided us with a roadmap to life. He has given us countless contingencies in which we may choose good and live, or evil and perish. Realizing this, it is our duty to change.

Man, in Adam, changed from a perfect being to an imperfect one; mankind, through Jesus’ ransom price paid, will have the opportunity in the millennium to change from imperfect beings to perfect beings; we, as prospective members of the Church, must make our change now.

As with any roadmap, we must know where we are starting from as well as where we are going. Our starting point we learn in (2 Timothy 3:1-7 KJV) *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.* Pastor Russell comments on this that it is not perilous to the world because they are not on trial for life, we are. The Scripture continues: {2} *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, {3} Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, {4} Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; {5} Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. {6} For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, {7} Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.* That, my friends, is a horrible list of qualities; and he is not speaking of the world, this is a warning to us, of conditions which do exist, and by extension, a warning for self-examination.

Our intended character destination is found in (Titus 2 KJV) *“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: {2} That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. {3} The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; {4} That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, {5} To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. {6} Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded. {7} In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, {8} Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. {9} Exhort servants to be obedient unto*

their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; {10} Not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. {11} For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, {12} Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; {13} Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; {14} Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. {15} These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.”

What a contrast of character traits. I pray that in our own self-examinations that each of us can relate more to Titus than Timothy. But referring again to our roadmap, what path do we take to go from Timothy to Titus? Let us start with Romans 12: 1 and 2: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* Then in (Hebrews 12:9-13 KJV) *Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? {10} For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. {11} Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. {12} Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; {13} And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.* So we need to appropriately respond to our corrections from the Father. This reminds us of the Scripture in (Matthew 18:3 KJV) *And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.* And (Acts 26:18 KJV) *To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Permit me now to read the sixth chapter of Romans in its entirety as my words could never come close to saying what has already been said: (Romans 6 KJV) *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? {2} God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? {3} Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were*

baptized into his death? {4} Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. {5} For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: {6} Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. {7} For he that is dead is freed from sin. {8} Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: {9} Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. {10} For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. {11} Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. {12} Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. {13} Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. {14} For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. {15} What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. {16} Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? {17} But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. {18} Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. {19} I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. {20} For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. {21} What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. {22} But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. {23} For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Brethren, in the celebration of this memorial of our Lord's death in paying the ransom price, let us do Him the honor of showing our appreciation of his sacrifice on our behalf by continuing to change, to continue to ripen the growing fruits of the Spirit which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. Let us continue to change until we can say with confidence (2 Corinthians 3:18 KJV) *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."*

(2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV) *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*