

Will God Change His Mind?

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God has “changed His mind” on occasion (e.g., Exo. 32:7-14; Num. 14:11-20). If God never “changes His mind” about anything Deism is justified, and many of our prayers are vain. Often the very aim of our supplications is to persuade God to intervene providentially in situations that (as we understand from the Bible) would not contradict His immutability. These prayers involve cases in which we fear He might not act if we did not make our petitions known.

However, all of these occasions (concerning which we hope to persuade God to act providentially because we have prayed) have a common thread. They relate to His dealings with our finite and temporal circumstances. For example, had He destroyed the wilderness murmurers and created a new nation through Moses, it would not have altered His promises to Abraham, including the promised Seed Who would bless all nations (Gal. 3:16).

When we pray about various circumstances or people, those things for which we pray are indifferent matters regarding God’s plan to redeem mankind. We may earnestly desire and pray that God will restore the health of a dedicated brother or sister. However, his or her salvation does not depend on whether or not the prayer is answered in keeping with our desire.

No one with even a smattering of Bible knowledge would ask God to save some sincere pagan through Buddha. The general thrust of the Bible, to say nothing of numerous explicit statements (e.g., John 14:6), renders such a prayer unthinkable

It would be absolute folly to ask God to save an impenitent sinner in his sins, an infidel in his unbelief, or a reprobate against his own will. By various imperative, categorical statements we know that God’s Will is eternally settled in such redemptive issues, for example:

- “I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish” (Luke 13:3).
- “For except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).
- “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20).

God’s promise to **Abraham as it related to the saving Gospel** is the subject of His sworn statement:

Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the **immutability of his counsel**, interposed with an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it is **impossible for God to lie**, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us (Heb. 6:17-18; emp. DM).

God cannot lie, **period**; but, as he began his letter to Titus, Paul especially stressed this facet of God's nature **in relation to matters of the promised salvation**:

Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal; but in his own seasons manifested his word in the message, wherewith I was intrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior (Tit. 1:1-3; emp. DM).

God has sealed all matters pertaining to redemption. He would violate and contradict His own immutability were He to change them. The Lord's categorical statements above embrace the very basic conditions upon which God grants saving grace through His Son. He would not only be undependable and whimsical, but deceptive, were His conditions of pardon not absolutely constant and unexceptional. Were God a Divine Change Agent we would not know what to believe, to do, or to teach concerning the question of questions, "What must I do to be saved?"

God definitively revealed His plan to save men through the death of His Son. In spite of this fact men sometimes make exceedingly foolish statements: "We don't know why God chose to save us through the sacrifice of Christ; He could have done it some other way." Surely those who thus speak have not thought through what they are saying.

In the first place, where did any puny, ignorant man learn that there was "some other way"? Further, consider what such sophistry implies about God: He **could** have redeemed man by some other means, but He **chose** to do it in a way that required unspeakable – and unnecessary – suffering on the part of His only begotten Son! Such sadistic behavior would be utterly irreconcilable with the love and mercy of God. When His sinless Son prayed three times, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me" (Mat. 26:39-44), surely, had there been any other possible way to secure our redemption, His loving Father would have employed it. There was no other way.

In Divine Triune Council the scheme of human redemption was conceived before creation was set (1 Pet. 1:18-20; cf. Mic. 5:2; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:11; 2 Tim. 1:9). This plan was as perfect, certain, and final as Deity Itself. Even Satan, with his evil angels and his mighty weapon of death, could not prevent its fruition in the establishment of the eternally purposed church

(Mat. 16:18; Eph. 3:10–11). If, after all of the Divine planning, prophecy, and typology, God had “changed His mind” about the way in which He would effect man’s redemption, how could we depend upon any other thing He said? The very suggestion borders on blasphemy.

Others have long suggested that God has changed His mind about the actual responses man must make in order to be saved through Christ. Roman Catholicism and Protestantism alike are built on the proposition that God does not mean what He says about the plan of salvation, the church, worship, holy living, and other subjects, including the Judgment.

I have heard some brethren, otherwise known for their soundness in the faith, state in sermons, usually after rehearsing the plan of salvation, “We have the Lord’s plan in the Bible which we must obey. However, if the Lord chooses to save some who have lived since Calvary without baptism, I will have no objection.” Surely, they know not what they say! Such a statement implies that we may learn at the Judgment that the Lord Jesus lied to us and led us to believe and preach a lie.

Some of our apostate brethren are only a footprint behind the denominationalists, boldly declaring that God has changed His mind about – of all things – baptism. Royce Money, at the time he was President of Abilene Christian University, is a case in point. In his ACU Lectureship speech in February 2000, after he made what at first sounded like a strong statement on the necessity of baptism, he then took it all back. Of John 3:5 he said:

I assume it’s still true. That’s the rule, but what about the exceptions? What about countless believers...whose spirituality and Christian virtues at times far outstrip mine? What about all that? I don’t know, but the Lord knows exceptions, and I hope He makes a lot of them. Our job, it seems to me, is to teach the rule and let the Lord make the exceptions [long and loud applause].

As all certifiable liberals so often do, Money put his brain in neutral and raced his emotional engine in this statement. I paraphrase: “God is obligated to make exceptions to His teaching on baptism because there are so many ‘spiritual believers’ out there who do not believe in it. Surely He will not condemn all of those good, sincere people.” This is vintage denominational tripe. No, brother Money – it is not our job to teach the rule **and** suggest that the Lord will make exceptions. It is our job to teach the rule – **period** (Mat, 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16)!

Will someone please explain to me how this apostate brother knows that “the Lord knows exceptions” to John 3:5? Has he had a direct communication from on high? He certainly gave no Scripture for His outrageous announcement, nor could he if he tried. His bold assertion

of exceptions to John 3:5 (in which the Lord **explicitly denied any exceptions** to His stated rule) would be amusing were it not so spiritually destructive. Obviously, this man believes that the Lord has changed His mind about baptism. According to him, what Christ really meant was, "Except **some** be born of water and Spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Others can enter without doing so." Again, Christ really meant, "**Some** who believe and are baptized shall be saved, but others will be excused from being baptized."

If men can so easily dismiss baptism, why stop there (of course, the liberals don't)? Why could not the infidel argue that Christ did not mean what He said about believing in Him? If God will make exceptions on baptism, surely, He would be unfair to refuse exceptions on faith. Perhaps He has changed His mind about the sin of Sodom, too.

Of course, no mortal should object to anything that God does, but is there the slightest hint that God has changed or will change His mind about salvation requirements? Such statements suggest that at the Judgment the Lord may say that He really did not mean what He said in His Word about baptism. The seeds of Universalism are in this declaration. (1) If baptism is the sinner's only access to the blood of Christ (which it is: Rom. 6:3) and (2) if there is no remission of sins apart from His blood (and there is not: Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:22; 1 Pet. 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; et al.), then (3) **if there are exceptions** to the requirement of baptism there must be exceptions to the need of Christ's blood to obtain remission of sins. If this is so with one, then why not with all, unless God is a respecter of persons? — which He is not (Acts 10:34-35).

Why would anyone who is seriously interested in the salvation of souls even think about suggesting that the Lord may exempt some from baptism or that maybe He has changed His mind about this or any other requirement (e.g., repentance, confession, a godly life)? One who thus views any statement of God's Word relating to salvation no longer believes the Lord's awful promise: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48).

God has not changed His mind. Those who assume that He has done so would do well to change theirs while they still live this side of the Judgment.

[**Note:** I wrote this MS, and it originally appeared as an "Editorial Perspective" in the August 2000 issue of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*, of which I was editor at the time.]

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