

# Trusting God in Changing Times

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

**Preached on:** Tuesday, July 23, 2024

**Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Well, as it works out this evening, tonight is kind of an extra spot in the pulpit schedule of our church this evening. I just finished Matthew chapter 5 on Sunday, and I plan to turn to Matthew 6 the next time I'm in the pulpit, but that's not going to be for a week and a half or so, I plan to be away next week, and so tonight is something of an orphan slot in the overall scheme and it's very propitious, it's very providential, because tonight I'm going to preach one of my favorite messages of all time, and the funny thing is, is that I haven't preached it yet. I have a sense of how this is going to go, and I'm looking forward to it, not only for my own sake, because I need what we're going to hear from God's word this evening, but I also know that it's going to be a blessing and an encouragement to you. It's a matter of public knowledge that the past four days have been a time of great change in our family, and there's no need to dwell on that. In the past month, we've had a great change in our church as Andrew and Kim moved away, and their strategic presence is no longer with us and so there's been a lot of change that has taken place in very recent days. And it's not just my family. It's not just, you know, the departure of the Snellings. In a church of our size, someone is always facing professional change or medical difficulties, personal change, whether it's minor change or the ultimate change even of facing death, you know, this is a matter that change is all about us. And I'm not by nature, very much by nature, I do not like change, which means that I'm living in the wrong universe because change is a part of everything that we do, and all of these important changes have made me focus on some things that I'm going to share with you this evening in the hope and in the confidence in the Holy Spirit that it will be a great encouragement to you as well, and so that's what's ahead for us tonight.

I've titled tonight's message, "Trusting God in Changing Times," and, you know, that parallels a book title, and that's kind of deliberate there. But trusting God in changing times, when the ground is shaking and trembling underneath us, and the things that once provided stability have now been overturned, and we're not sure what the future holds, what is it that we grab hold of to find an anchor and how do we settle our hearts when change is all about us, that's what I want to share with you here this evening. It's a very simple message and it'll probably be a little bit brief even. In tonight's message, I'm doing something that the approach of this is not something that everybody would affirm, but I actually think it's really important for a pastor to do messages like this from time to time to help people grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. We're not going to look at one specific passage and evaluate it with context and all of that, rather, what we're doing is we're synthesizing, we're bringing together biblical principles from different places in

order to give us something that we can actually rest our lives on and rest our minds on and be able to build upon. One of the challenges of expository preaching, as some practice it, is that it can be done in a way that, as you deal with the context, that's all well and good, but if you're not giving the people something that actually is constructive and something that builds on life, if you never do something like what we're doing here tonight, I think you're leaving a gap, and that's why I like to preach messages like this from time to time.

So trusting God in changing times, that's what we want to deal with. I have a dictionary at home that I turn to from time to time. It defines change in this way: change is to make or to become distinctly different. When something changes, it becomes different; either change is imposed upon something or circumstances develop and it becomes different. There is a difference from the old to the new, from the past to the future, you might say. And if you're like me, you don't like change, but change is inevitable, and we need perspective to help us transcend it and to even flourish in the midst of it and so that's what we want to look at tonight. How do we trust God in changing times? And I'm going to break this into three sections. Now, let me just give you the points in advance, because I think the points themselves will kind of help you see where we're going. First of all, you trust God's unchanging character. You trust God's unchanging character. Secondly, you trust God's unchanging presence. And thirdly, you trust God's unchanging purpose. His unchanging character, his unchanging presence, and his unchanging purpose. In other words, instability in life causes us to dig deeper for that which is stable. We move from the shifting sand to lay down our foundation on the rock that is below the sand, and that's what we need to do.

And so first of all tonight, trust God's unchanging character and what is remarkable about this is that in times of change, even for those of you that have no, you don't aspire to be a theologian, you don't aspire to that, the truth of the matter is that theology matters. In times of change, your theology matters, and you must think theologically. To state it in a more colloquial way, trust, trusting God in times of change, it begins vertically. It begins vertically. It does absolutely no good to try to grasp onto things that, you know, are elusive. You have to begin with your response to change with your thinking about God, about who he is, and, you know, and to reach beyond the emotions of the change, to reach beyond the uncertainty of what lies ahead, and to lay hold of that which is stable, which is fixed, which does not change, and you can only do that through biblical sound theology. And to trust God's unchanging character, we need to introduce a theological term here that establishes everything else to follow, and it is this, it's that God is immutable. He is immutable, and what that word means is that God does not change. Circumstances change, life changes, medical conditions change, relationships change, people come and go, change all around in all that I see, but we lay hold of the fact in those times that are really affecting the basic human aspirations and loves of our heart, we have to lay hold of that which does not change. Malachi 3:6, God says, "I the LORD do not change." God does not change. What God is, he has always been, and what God is, who God is, he forever will be.

And I invite you to turn to Psalm 102 for a text to just kind of orient our thinking here. Psalm 102 and we can start in verse 24 where the psalmist says, "O my God, I say, 'take me not away in the midst of my days-- you whose years endure throughout all generations!' Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish," the heavens, the skies, the stars, the sun and the moon above us, they'll all die and go away, "but you will remain." God is more lasting than the stars in the orbit above our head. Verse 26, "They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end."

And so the immutability of God, the unchangeableness of God, is the basis upon which we trust him. It is the basis upon which we, and it is the only basis upon which we find any stability in life. We're born, we grow, we live, we die. We get ill and things change. Relationships come, relationships go. Children are born, children grow up, children move away. Friends come and go. And all of that, and the things that make life precious to us on a human level are things that we cannot ultimately grasp and keep, and we hold them all with a loose hand. Death intervenes suddenly and without warning. And so there is this fundamental instability of life on this earth that sooner or later we have to come to grips with and we can do everything we can by way of seeking financial security, isolating ourselves from the influences of the world, but we can't ultimately hide ourselves from this. Life changes. Relationships change. And the things that we are attached to are eventually taken away from us. Sooner or later, they're going to be taken away from us. You know, in the words of the wedding vows, 'till death do us part. Well, we are going to part one day and so the question is, what do we do, what do we do to prepare ourselves for that? When we find ourselves in the midst of change, what do we lay hold of? And beloved, it's only through earnest spiritual thinking earnest biblical reflection that we can come to a place of stability on this. If we think that God's responsibility and God exists simply to help us through the rough times of life, and we have that superficial view of moralistic therapeutic deism animating our thoughts, when real serious change comes, we're going to be a small boat in a major hurricane not able to cast an anchor that will hold us.

And so I don't want you to be in that position. I don't want to be in that position. But our anchor is the immutability of God. As the circumstances change, as relationships come and go, we are anchored in the most comforting truth of them all is that God does not change. He is still on his throne. Scripture says in Hebrews 13 verse 8, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Who Christ was in the past is the same who he is now, is the same whom he will always be. It is impossible for God to change, and he does not change. James 1 verse 17 says this, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change." There is nothing about God that changes and so as we walk through the different stages of life, and as we ourselves are changed and changing and changeable, as we deal with fickle people or failing health, there is this constant that we can always come back to. And I'm speaking tonight to Christians, the God who saved you, the God who brought the gospel to you, the God who revealed his love to you in the Lord Jesus Christ, the God who made you, the God who is working in your heart, he is

the same God now that he was back then. And so when life changes, we turn to the immutability of God, that he has not changed and we have a fixed reference point by which to interpret everything else.

And so we are entitled to reason in this way, we are entitled to think like this, and not only entitled to, but we should: rather than wringing our hands and saying, what's going to happen tomorrow, what's going to become of this difficult situation, what's going to happen if this relationship doesn't come back to me, we reason like this: if God has provided in the past, he'll provide in the future because he does not change. If he has comforted me in the past, he'll comfort me again in the future because he does not change. You see, you have to have that "because" clause. The "because clause": I know that he'll provide in the future because he does not change. I know he will comfort me in the future even if I don't feel it now because he does not change. If he has loved me once, he will love me forever because he does not change. And so we see what Scripture says about the unchangeableness of God, the immutability of God, we lay hold of that, we meditate on that, and we draw conclusions from that, that in the midst of, you know, the inevitable variableness of life, there's something that does not vary, that does not change, and we lay hold of that, and we love him for it.

Now secondly, so we trust in God's unchanging character, we see it in Scripture, we study it, we grasp it, we meditate on it, and then we rely on it, we draw upon it. God is an infinite God, and beloved, his immutability is like having an infinite resource in your bank account that you can always draw upon without fear that you're drawing too much from it. This is the one thing that you can always rely on. This is the thing that you can come back to when you're breathing your final breaths on your deathbed and say, "No, my soul is safe because the God who saved me is with me even in this most extreme hour, and the God who delivered me in the past will deliver me now safely into my eternal home. I have no fear." And so we trust in God's unchanging character. Now secondly, kind of having established that vertical dimension to it, let's look at it this way and talk about it this way, that this trust of which we're speaking, there's an inward aspect to it as well. We trust in something outside of us, something that's not dependent upon us. We trust in God's immutable character that is completely independent of us but that has an implication for our inner man and there's another aspect of theology that we should draw upon here, we speak about God's omnipresence. It means that God is present everywhere in his universe and the thing about the omnipresence of God is that Scripture teaches us to make that very personal, that we are to appropriate that in our own heart. Scripture applies the doctrine of the omnipresence of God to believers in an intensely personal way, a very intimate way.

And let's just focus on that word, on the intimacy aspect of this. You can be turning to Isaiah 41, because I'm going to be turning there in just a moment, Isaiah chapter 41. When we get to Matthew 6, starting in August, you could really consider that whole chapter and the messages around it is going to be an extended study on intimacy with God. Intimacy with God is at the core of what we're going to be studying in Matthew 6. But when it comes to the omnipresence of God, there is an intensely intimate aspect to it. It's very, very personal. We are meant to appropriate the omnipresence of God and have

that be a matter, a doctrine, an aspect of his character that has a very sustaining impact on our lives and upon our hearts.

In Isaiah chapter 41, God tells his people, "fear not, for I am with you." There's another one of those "because" clauses, fear not because I am with you. The omnipresence of God means that he's not only present out there somewhere, it means that he's present right here with me in the midst of everything that is changing all about me. "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." David applied that presence to his inner man in Psalm 23, verse 4, a most famous verse, where David says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for," what? "You are with me." Another "because" clause. "I'm not afraid even in the face of death because you are with me. You, my unchanging God, you are always with me. Your presence is an unchanging aspect of the realm of reality in which I live. It is independent of my feelings. It is independent of change. It is independent of opinions. It is independent of the fickleness of man. It is independent of the changing nature of circumstances, so that even when I face the most intimidating of circumstances, facing the shadow of death, I'm not afraid." Why? "Because," I have a "because" clause, "Because you're with me. And that transcends everything about life. That's more than sufficient for all of my needs. God," you say to yourself, "God, though everything changes around me, you yourself do not change and you are with me always." Jesus said at the end of Matthew, as he sent out the disciples to make disciples of all the nations, he said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," so that the Lord who was crucified for us, the Lord who loved us and gave himself up for us, the Lord who came from heaven to earth, obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross, buried, raised again, ascended into heaven, one day coming again, that Lord, that Christ, that unchanging, eternal Son of God is the one who is with us, the one who promised, "I will be with you always, I am with you always." And he is a God who cannot break his promise. He couldn't break it if he wanted to, and he won't want to.

And even as we contemplate the presence of Christ, you know, we have him now, he's with us throughout all of life, but Scripture tells us not to limit our thinking in that direction to that realm; it's not just an earthly matter of which we discuss these things. Jesus in John 14 said, "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and I will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." So that if you are a Christian this evening, there is no moment ever from this point forward throughout all of the endless ages of eternity where you will not be with the Lord Jesus Christ. He is with us now, with us always, and one day we will be with him in his immediate presence, where Scripture says we will see him face to face, and we will be made like him because we will see him just as he is. And it is the purpose of Christ that in the future there will be a translation of his saints into his presence, and thus we will always be with the Lord.

In fact, turn to 1 Thessalonians 4 with me. I mean, these statements, and I'm just giving you a small sampling, this is like a Costco sample of these things that I'm sharing with you. I would encourage you to do your own study on this theme and see that if I have done anything here this evening, I've undersold the concept. I have not overstated it. The

presence of the Lord in the presence of earthly loss, earthly death. In 1 Thessalonians 4, verse 13, the apostle said, "we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep," believers who have died, "that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope." Notice, notice, beloved, that what Paul is about to explain is meant to transform the way that we respond to earthly loss and I want you to see what he grounds it all in. In verse 14, he says, "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord." We will always be with the Lord who loved us and who gave himself up for us. Somehow, we will see his glorious face in person, in his immediate presence. Somehow, we will see the wounds, yet visible above, by which he paid the price of our redemption. And we will be in the visible presence of the proof of his love for us, that he loved us even unto death, even unto self-sacrifice, and we will always be with him, with his eternal love on permanent, glorious display, and we will be with him in a realm that we will know fully and completely, so distinct from earth as our unchanging home.

Now, I don't know about you, but I kind of look forward to that. I look forward to that and one of the things that I increasingly look forward to about being in the presence of the Lord, being in heaven, being in the eternal state with him, is that it's not, there won't be this change that we have experienced so much on earth. And the Lord who established this, the Lord who planned this, who purchased it with his own atoning blood, the Lord who is guaranteeing this and working all of human history, every detail providentially to accomplish his appointed ends, that Lord who has done all of that for his people is the Lord who is with us in an unchanging, unbroken, faithful presence that can never be changed. And so, beloved, that unchanging presence of our Lord is the one and only thing that gives us final certainty, final serenity, final stability in life. Circumstances change. Loved ones leave us by way of geography or by way of death. And of course, we feel it deeply. We miss them, we have a hole in our heart when those things come to pass, but understand the bigger principle, understand the spiritual opportunity, if you will, that is yours when this comes into your life. What God is doing, is he is weaning you from a love of this world. He is weaning you from a dependence upon circumstances and upon frail mortal flesh. He's weaning you from all of that and the weaning process for a toddler is difficult. It's difficult when a child is weaned off his mother's milk, but it's a necessary process that eventually leads to contentment. God in the midst of the change is weaning us from a love and dependence upon the things and people of this world so that we might more fully rest our satisfaction, our hope, our confidence in him alone, and what we find if we embrace that, these principles, is that it makes the unchanging presence of Christ all the more sweeter to us. "Lord, these circumstances I've enjoyed, these relationships that have meant so much, I see them taken away but you remain. You're faithful. You're here. You haven't left." It gives us a greater sense of the value and the precious gift that we have in Christ that we have one like him that never leaves us nor forsakes us. Now see,

these are the things that matter. These are the things that matter that enable us to transcend earthly change.

Let's go to a third and final principle here. Thirdly, trust God's unchanging purpose. Beloved, we must settle it in our minds as a guiding principle that could never be violated is that the purpose of God is always to do good to you as a believer in the end. No matter what happens, the purpose is good. Even if the purpose is wrapped up in what seems to be dark clouds which hide the sunshine of his face, even if it seems to be, it's delivered in circumstances that are foreboding, you and I as believers in Jesus Christ must have a settled apprehension, comprehension that every circumstance in life has been appointed for us by a wise and loving God who loves us as established by the cross of Jesus Christ. Every circumstance is appointed for us by a wise and good and loving God, who has proven at the cross that he can be absolutely trusted to always seek what is good for us so that there is a vast context to the verse that we often quote, that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him who are called according to his purpose. All things working together for good.

Now, the fact that sometimes the Lord uses black thread to sew together the good purpose doesn't mean that we focus on the blackness of the moment, the seeming blackness of the moment. We have confidence in the master weaver to pull together, to bring together a tapestry that will be perfectly good, perfectly right, perfect in every respect when it's all said and done so that the physical suffering that some of you are enduring, the emotional suffering that some of you are going through, the times of temptation and seeming spiritual coldness, and those and a thousand things more, to say nothing of the joys that he gives to us as well, that God is weaving all of those together as a master chef puts together the perfect display of a banquet, he puts all of that together so that without fail, every one of us that knows Christ, every one of us that has been redeemed by him, in the end, we are going to be overwhelmed by the knowledge, the realization, and the act of worship in which included in that is going to be he has done all things well. He did all things well. He was always doing all things well, even when I kicked against it. Even when there were hot tears running down your cheek, he was doing all things well. He had a purpose that transcended your resistance to him in the moment and graciously keeps us and graciously sustains us and loves us even when we are not exercising faith but doubt and resentment against him even. He is such a good and gracious and loving God to all of his children, overlooks our petulance, overlooks our lack of faith, and with the perfect love of an eternal Father, continues unhindered on his purpose to bless us in the end. He, knowing the outcome in advance, works through, even though we would not have it his way for a time, he works it through, knowing that what he's going to deliver to us in the end will be a perfect product in which, as I repeat myself, we will be astonished at how he has done all things well.

And so, beloved, what we see is this, we get tripped up because we have an earthly perspective on things. We're responding to what's immediately in front of us. We're responding to the emotions of our heart in the moment. That's where we get tripped up. Trust has an eternal perspective at all times. God promises unending good to us, to take

even the afflictions that we have now and to make them contribute to that good outcome. The afflictions of today contribute to the good eternal outcome.

Turn in your Bibles, if you would, to 2 Corinthians 4. 2 Corinthians 4. I often point people to this passage, and I often come back to it in my own heart. Scripture says that faith is the assurance of things hoped for. It's the assurance of things not seen. And then beginning in verse 13 of 2 Corinthians 4, I'm stretching this out more than I usually do here with this text. "Since we have the same spirit of faith according to what has been written, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we also believe, and so we also speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence." See, the presence of God emphasized even in this, the resurrection, the goal of the resurrection is that we would be in the presence of the Lord, that unchanging, eternal presence, and he is with us now and he will be with us always and we will be in his presence. Paul says, "it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God." Now in verse 16, "So we do not lose heart," you could say, so we trust God, "Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." God, renewing our hearts with his presence, with the promise of his eternal purpose, that these afflictions that we go through for a time here on earth, which are by definition temporary and passing, that God uses temporary affliction to accomplish an eternal purpose of good in us.

That verse in verse 16, this is just an aside, my love and affection for Martyn Lloyd-Jones is a matter of public record. As he was dying in the final days of his life and he had lost the ability to speak even, he pointed one of his daughters to 2 Corinthians 4:16. It's really precious. It's just so precious. And she read this verse, and she said in so many words, she said, "Dad, is that what you're experiencing right now? Your inner man is being renewed day by day?" He shook his head vigorously, "Yes, that is exactly what I'm experiencing." And in the shaking of his head, without words, he was saying, "This is what's happening in my heart. Yes, my outer man is wasting away." And at the end of his life, he told them, "Don't pray for my healing. Don't hold me back from glory. I'm ready to go into glory. Don't hold me back with your prayers." And as the day drew closer and closer in 1981, the testimony, the unspoken testimony of his lips was, "My inner man is being renewed even now." That's how powerful these things are and you could go through many a biography and find many a man of God, many a woman of God, giving testimony to the exact same thing.

Beloved, people die like that, follow me here, people are able to die like that, people are able to die with that kind of power because prior in life, they loved God enough to pursue him in his word. They believed the truth enough to sit under it and make it a priority in their life and they established these principles of truth as they sought God in their daily life, in the unspectacular moment by moment of life, so that when the time came, it was established in their heart and the Spirit of God draws upon all of that and ushers them into glory as a whirlwind fuels their chariot of fire into heaven. That's what this does.

Look over at the book of Hebrews, chapter 6, and all of this just showing you the critical nature of laying hold of the immutability of God, the unchanging character of God, the unchanging presence of God, the unchanging purpose of God. Hebrews 6 in verse 17 and 18. Hebrews 6, verse 17, "So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us." God made a promise, and it's impossible for God to lie. His purpose cannot change, and he has declared to his people his intention to do good for us and to us throughout all of eternity so that we have an anchor for our soul, verse 19, "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain." Into the most holy place, into the most holy manifestation of the glory of God, we have an anchor that goes right there that holds us in the midst of change and that stands the test of circumstance, that stands the test of time, that stands the test of change, that stands the test of death, sure and steadfast, guaranteed to us by the love of our unchanging God. Charles Spurgeon said, "You should feel that everything you have are but frail things and are apt to change. I know that you begin to look upon that little property as a very sure thing, but do not be deceived. The only sure thing is your God."

So in the midst of change, in the midst of changing times, beloved, we trust God. We look past the emotions. We look past the uncertainty of what the future holds and you trust your unchanging God. And perhaps in your heart, the Spirit of God will bring to mind again and again a verse that he's been bringing to my mind again and again for quite a long time. Hebrews 13, verse 14, "here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come."

Let's pray together.

*Father, we praise you and ascribe glory to your unchanging character, glory to your unchanging name. The God that you are today is the God that you have always been, that you are the God today that you were 2,000 years ago and that you will be 2,000 years from now. And while circumstances come and go, people come and go, good health comes and goes, Father, you are the same and in that we have our sure and certain anchor that holds the ship steady in the midst of the storm. We thank you for that. Thank you for pouring out upon us your unchanging, immutable love. It is the one certain thing that we can hold on to, and it is enough. You are who you are, you do what you do, and in light of who you are, Father, that is enough to satisfy our souls. It satisfies our deepest longing, meets, supplies our every need. We're so grateful, Father. And for these dear friends, here gathered in the room, watching over the live stream, those who will hear in subsequent media, Father, may your grace, your unchanging grace, your unchanging purpose be a profound encouragement to them going forward so that they find themselves ever prepared for the inevitable changes of life as they look not to a city here on earth, not to relationships here on earth, but their hearts would be set firmly upon that city that is yet to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at [thetruthpulpit.com](http://thetruthpulpit.com) teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.