

Bethel

Pulpit

“Jesus Immutably the Same”

Sermon Number 489

**Sermon preached at Bethel Chapel, Luton,
by Mr. B. A. Ramsbottom,
on Lord's day evening, 9th September, 2018**

Text: “*Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (Hebrews 13. 8).

This means that He is always there, and always will be there, at God's right hand – there to help His people, there as their faithful, unchanging Friend, there to save them, there to deliver them. There never will be a time when a needy sinner seeks after Him, and He is not there. There never will be a time when a needy sinner prays to Him, and He refuses to answer that prayer. There never will be a time when a needy sinner cries for deliverance, and the Lord fails to be merciful.

So this is one of the wonderful foundation texts of holy Scripture. In this very beautiful Epistle, so many things have been said about this glorious Person, and really this is the conclusion of them all: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” In a sense, it does not altogether seem to fit into the chapter. It is a word which suddenly appears, and it is a word which there stands alone. This glorious Person of whom so many things have been said – His Person, His everlasting priesthood, the value of His sacrifice – so we might go on, but they are unchanging, because He, the Lord Jesus, is unchanging.

The word the theologians always use is this (whether you children, you young ones know it or not I am not sure), this word *immutable*. One of our hymns begins, “Jesus, immutably the same.” What does this word *immutable* mean? Well, you might say, it means the Lord Jesus does not change. Well, it does, but it means more than that. Immutability means not only that the Lord Jesus *does not* change, but He *never will* change, and because He is true Almighty God He *never can* change.

So it is a glorious foundation truth. Really, we have it right at the beginning of this Epistle in chapter 1, with all these things that do change. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thine hands.” Now are they immutable? You

wonder. If you look around, these things, the rocks and the hills and the sky, seem to be things that do not change. “They shall perish; but Thou remainest.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” If you go through this Epistle, it has so much about change. There are all these people. At the beginning you have Moses and Joshua; they have gone. You have that wonderful eleventh chapter, the worthies – O so many of them – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; they have all gone. You have the ceremonial law; it was given by God, but that has gone. You have the priesthood. You have the sacrifices. You have Aaron and his succession. They have all gone. “But Thou remainest.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Now beloved friends, this is not just a doctrine. There is a suitability in it, and the suitability is especially this: because *we do* change; we are dying, changing creatures. We are continually changing, and most of our changes are not for the better; they are for the worse. If we have any love to the Saviour, that changes. Sometimes it is warm; sometimes it is cold. If we have any zeal, well sometimes it seems to be there; sometimes it does not. If we possess the fear of God, sometimes it is tender and sometimes it seems to be gone. It is change and decay and corruption all around us. But here we have the blessed opposite, and that is its suitability.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Now just before the Old Testament revelation came to an end, in those days of terrible darkness in the times of Malachi, this truth was mentioned. “I am the Lord.” He tells us who He is. “I change not.” And there is something that flows from it: “Therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” The implication is, if He was any other than God, we should be consumed, and we deserve to be consumed, and God’s people feel they deserve to be consumed, and sometimes they fear they may be consumed. It is like that word concerning the burning bush in the wilderness: “The bush burned ... and the bush was not consumed.”

O dear child of God this evening, those of you with your trials, your fears, your problems, your sorrows, may you know something of this word: “Not consumed.” If the Lord were to change, if He were to love one day and not love the next, then we should all be consumed. But it is this: “Not

consumed.” Didn’t we sing something about it just now: “The flame shall not hurt thee.” What are flames? Well, they consume. “Not consumed.” “The flame shall not hurt thee.” What about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in that burning, fiery furnace? “Not consumed.” Why? “I am the Lord” – greater than the flames, almighty, able to preserve His people, able to keep them alive, able to bring them through.

“I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” I do like these mentions of old Jacob! He was like us. If ever there was a changeable creature, it was Jacob! You would think he would have been consumed, but he was not, because he had a faithful and unchanging God. Let me just give you one illustration from old Jacob’s life: the case of Joseph. It broke his heart. He could not see any end to it. The case was impossible. He said, “Ye shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.” It seemed Joseph was dead, and he had been cruelly killed, and that was the end. There was one day when Jacob smiled again, and do you know what it was? He said, “Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.” That is what that word means: “Not consumed,” and it flows from immutability. “I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” So this is a foundation truth, and it is the foundation of our hope. We read so much in Scripture about the Rock of Ages, the foundation. It is a sure foundation we need. Surely, beloved friends, the important thing about any foundation: it must not be something that will shake or something that will give way, or something that is not secure. It must be strong. It must be permanent. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” “Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation”; “and whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.”

This is the foundation: “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Now there will be many things you need and other things you do not need, but this is vital. If the Lord teaches you your need, you need a sure foundation to build your eternal hope upon as a sinner, a foundation that will stand in the great day, a foundation that will never give way. This is it, in the Person and finished work of the Lord Jesus. What a wonderful

thing that poor, unworthy sinners are permitted, welcomed, invited to build their hope upon this sure foundation!

“Is He a Rock? how firm He proves!
The Rock of Ages never moves.”

But also throughout your life, your pilgrimage, there will be times when you feel that everything is giving way, and how can you stand, how can you continue? “When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I.”

“Here we have a sure foundation;
Here’s the refuge of the lost.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” So He is unchanging in His glorious Person, the Son of God from all eternity, and a real Man, His sacred humanity brought into everlasting union with His divine Person. It is the Person of Christ. There is no change, no variability here. This sure foundation! “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” May He be sweetly revealed to you this evening by the Holy Spirit.

But then His work, that glorious righteousness. We have none of our own. God requires one.

“Our best is stained and dyed with sin;
Our all is nothing worth.”

But this divinely-provided righteousness, the obedience of the incarnate Son of God to His Father’s law without any flaw in it. Divine justice cannot find a single flaw in it. There is a solid foundation here.

And then His precious, sin-atonement blood. What a foundation here! And there is no change, beloved friends, in its efficacy. When John viewed Him on the Isle of Patmos, he viewed Him as a Lamb that had been slain. The value of His atonement is the same this evening as it was when He was bleeding, dying on the cross. We have a good foundation here, beloved friends.

“Dear dying Lamb! Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,

Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” We might think of the promises, the promises of the Lord Jesus. Just take the one, the blessed one that is mentioned in this chapter: “He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Well, we sang of it just now:

“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,
I will not, I will not desert to his foes;
That soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.”

When I was a boy, all the old hymnbooks used to have a note on that verse. It said, “Agreeable to Dr. Doddridge’s translation.” Now I have never seen Dr. Doddridge’s translation, but I rather think it is something like this. Our Scripture says, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” but apparently it is very difficult to translate. It is almost a double or a treble negative. It keeps on saying it, just as our hymn puts it: “I’ll never, no never, no never forsake.” Why does the Lord put it so strongly? Because He knows the fears of God’s people. Because He knows they deserve to be forsaken. Because they perhaps fear they will be forsaken. “Not forsaken.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Now having spoken a few things on the dear Lord Jesus, His Person, His work, His immutability, unchanged, unchanging, there are some very interesting things said for the help and encouragement of the Lord’s people, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today. Now we think of a few of the *yesterdays* of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. That *yesterday* in eternity past when He entered into covenant with His Father, when He became His people’s Surety and Saviour and everlasting All, when He loved them with an everlasting love. The Lord Jesus is the same now, the same this evening, the same today as in that wonderful *yesterday* in eternity past.

And then there is that *yesterday*, the day of creation. The Lord Jesus was there. Never forget that He is the Creator. You young ones, thinking of the Lord Jesus, remember that He is the Creator, and, “Remember now *thy* Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure

in them.” Well, in creation-work, the Lord Jesus showed Himself to be almighty. He brought everything into being out of nothing, and all very good. He is the same today – the same in His divine, almighty power, the same to uphold His people, the same power to answer their prayers, the same to deliver them. All our hope is, “looking unto Jesus,” and we think of Him, the meek and lowly Jesus, and His matchless love. Never forget He is almighty. He is the One who created the world. We have that reminder of it in that well-known Scripture that all of you know so well and many of us love: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.” I need this help continually. It is almighty help. “My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” And then there is that *yesterday* when our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was here on earth. O the tender compassion, the gracious teaching, the sweet invitations, the way He answered prayer, the dealing with so many in affliction, even raising the dead! He is the same then as now, “the same yesterday, and to day.” He is now in heaven, risen, exalted, glorified, but His compassion is the same, His mercy is the same, His love is the same, His power is the same, the same as when that poor man said, “God be merciful to me”; the same as when the poor leper came, saying, “Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day.” And then we think of the *yesterday* in our soul’s experience. We look back. You think of your best moments, when Christ was made precious to you, when you felt it, and when you really loved Him. “The same yesterday, and to day.” You have changed a lot since those days. Haven’t there been those times when your love has been weak and cold? “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day.” But that *yesterday*. He took you in hand; He saved you by His grace; He blessed you. He will not forget you now. He will not cast you away. That love which He reveals: “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day.” O but this word *today*. There is a lot in it. What are you feeling today? Where are you today? Spiritually, are you healthy? Providentially, is everything going smoothly? *Today*. And the Lord Jesus knows all about your *today*, and

from everlasting He knew all about your *today*, and He understands your *today*, and He sympathises with your *today*.

What about that word that He spoke to Moses: “I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them.” That was *yesterday*. Now *today*. What is it? The Lord sees, the Lord hears, the Lord knows, the Lord delivers. “The same yesterday, and to day.” So if words mean anything at all, it means this: that what the Lord has been to you, He still will be to you. What He was, He still is. So it is really that which John Newton says: “His love in time past” – that is yesterday – “forbids me to think” – that is today.

“His love in time past forbids me to think
He’ll leave me at last in trouble to sink;
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”

The Lord has a blessed ability to bring His people “quite through.” We sang it at the end of our first hymn, and it is a good word; there is a lot of good divinity in it: “Is He thy God? He’ll bring thee through.”

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Now there is something a little bit surprising here. You would think it would say, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and tomorrow. That would seem to be the normal sequence. “The same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Now *that is all your tomorrows*. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Now it is the unknown way. It is that *tomorrow* that is before you, which so many of us fear, so many shrink from. Well, you might just think of one *tomorrow*, the day of your death when you shall stand before your Maker to give an account. What a mercy, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day,” and tomorrow, “and for ever.” You will find, dear child of God, that the One who is your Judge is the same One who is your Saviour.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” But there may be a black cloud before you. You will find the Lord Jesus is the same. He still loves you; He is still with you; He is still helping you; He is still guiding you; He is still delivering you; He is still bringing you through.

What a word was that to the disciples before the resurrection. They were so fearful, their Lord and Master leaving them. “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” Now what is your Galilee? The Galilee of the unknown way. It is this same Jesus, once crucified, risen, exalted, glorified.

“Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” So many of them had so many fears concerning that unknown way. You have only to think of Mary Magdalene, and to think of the two on the road to Emmaus, and to think of Thomas. It was the end of everything for them, and they had weeping, broken hearts. “Behold, He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see Him: lo, I have told you.” What did He say? “Ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” But it is not in yourself. It is not in your circumstances. It is all in this glorious Person who never changes.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.” Of course, because it says, “For ever,” it includes “a long eternity to spend, in singing, ‘God is love,’” where this same Jesus will greet these poor disciples. “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away *all tears* from their eyes.” That is the prospect of sinners saved by grace, and it is all in the Lord Jesus, all according to the riches of His grace.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.”

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The Lord in Zion reigns,	Should poverty, and loss
And will His people keep;	Of every kind of good,
’Tis He the universe sustains,	Conspire to make our weighty cross,
And well secures His sheep.	Our helper still is God.
Though with afflictions sore	May we for ever trust
He may them exercise;	And glory in His name;
Yet still His hand they shall adore,	Jesus, the faithful, true, and just,
And still His love shall prize.	For ever is the same!

J. Adams