

Lesson 7

God Is Immutable

We live in a world of constant change. There seems to be no stability or certainty about anything. Nations rise and fall, governments come to power and tumble, the dollar inflates and deflates, armies march and retreat, healthy people become sick and on and on the world goes. The only thing that is certain in this life is death, and most people mentally escape from facing the reality of physical death. The whole world is in flux and change. We cry out, "Is there anything that is stable, certain and fixed in this world? Are there any answers for a constantly changing society? Where will it all end? What is the purpose for living when nothing is stable?"

The Christian has an answer. There is only one absolute in the whole world and that is God. God is the Creator and Sustainer of the world, and apart from Him there are no answers for existence in a changing world. God is the answer to a mutable world, for He is immutable.

GOD'S IMMUTABILITY DEFINED

By immutability we mean that God is unchangeable and unchanging. God is perpetually the same. He is subject to no change in His being, attributes or plan. A God who could suffer the slightest degree of change is neither self-existent, self-sufficient, nor eternal, and so, is not God. God is unchanging or immutable because the Bible declares Him so.

"In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But you remain the same, and your years will never end." (Psa. 102:25-27)

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows." (James 1:17)

Because God has no beginning or ending He can know no change.

GOD'S IMMUTABILITY AND HIS ESSENCE

God in His essence, nature or substance does not change.

“I the Lord, do not change. . .” (Mal. 3:6)

God neither evolves, grows or improves; nor does He mature or deteriorate. He neither changes for the better or the worse, for He is perfect. All that God is within Himself does not change. Therefore, God’s attributes never change. The attributes of God can no more change than Deity can cease to be. His power stays infinitely strong; His knowledge stays infinitely true; His love stays infinitely constant; His holiness stays infinitely pure and His glory never diminishes.

GOD’S IMMUTABILITY AND HIS PLAN

An unchanging God has an unchanging plan for this world. God is immutable in His decree or eternal counsel. What God has decreed from eternity is unalterable.

“The plans of the LORD stand firm forever.” (Psa. 33:11)

“My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.” (Isa. 46:10)

God’s purpose never alters. One of two things makes a human being change his plans. The first is lack of foresight to anticipate everything, but God is omniscient (all knowing) so this is no problem to Him. The second thing is lack of power to execute one’s plans, but this again is no problem to God because He is omnipotent (all powerful).

God tells us that His counsel is immutable. The author of the Book of Hebrews, when referring to the Covenant of Grace which God established with His people based on the death of Christ, could speak of the ***“unchanging nature of his purpose”*** (Heb. 6:17). God’s unchanging plan to save sinful men through the person and work of Christ is still in operation at this very moment.

At this point a keen Bible student would say, “But doesn’t the Bible speak of God repenting, and this implies that God does change His mind?”

“And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” (Gen. 6:6 KJV)

“And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” (Jonah 3:10 KJV)

First, we must compare Scripture with Scripture and when we do we discover that God in His essence does not change by repenting.

“God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?” (Num. 23:19)

“He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind.” (1 Sam. 15:29)

Is this, then, a contradiction in Scripture? Absolutely not, for the answer is not found in a changing God, but in changing men. Second, when we speak of God repenting, this is called an anthropomorphism, which is attributing human traits to God to explain His actions. God often accommodates His language to our limited capacities. For instance, God is spoken of as having hands, ears and eyes, but we know He is a Spirit. The Bible speaks of God as waking up and sleeping, but we know that He neither slumbers or sleeps. Repentance in God is an anthropomorphism, for in reality the change is not in God, but in man and his relation to God. Third, God always carries out His secret will, although in His dealings with men it appears that he changes His mind; however, in actuality God is only carrying out His hidden will. There may be a change in God’s work, but not His will. He may will a change, but not change His will.

God is the Eternal Now. While we know that God has a plan, this should never discourage us from believing that God works now. We do not know His plan, but He has given such things as faith, obedience, prayer, the preaching of the gospel and the teaching of the Word as means to accomplish His ends. From our perspective we know that God can and does work in our experience, but we also know that He has a plan. God has allowed us to know of His plan to comfort us, but we must believe that God can work now in our experience.

GOD’S IMMUTABILITY AND FALLEN MAN’S MUTABILITY

Every person born into this world is human and corrupted by sin. Humanness and sinfulness make all men mutable. They are fickle, changing, in a state of flux and unstable as water. Men alter their opinions with every new whim. They change their resolutions at the first sign of crisis. They fluctuate in their friendships, for they are quick to love and quick to hate. Men change their colors according to their environment. They speak with a forked tongue and their word can never be fully trusted. Their thoughts are divided according to their own prejudices so that you never really know what they are thinking.

Men change but God does not change. There are changes in everything but God. God is and God has a plan that will not change. Only God can be truly trusted because He is immutable. Fallen man is inconstant and cannot be depended on. Complete trust in man will only end up in frustration and disappointment.

“Stop trusting in man. . .” (Isa. 2:22)

“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save.” (Psa. 146:3)

Only trust in an unchanging God will stabilize a sinful man in his humanness.

“This is what the Lord said, ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD.’” (Jer. 17:5)

Remember, God is the only unchanging force in this universe and those who get to know Him are anchored to a Rock.

GOD’S IMMUTABILITY AND THE SAVED

As Christians our faith runs hot and cold. We find ourselves on spiritual mountain tops and then in the valleys. Up and down we go. Sometimes God’s love is aflame in us and sometimes the embers are barely lighted. All Christians at times have spiritual fainting fits and become discouraged, despondent and depressed. But thanks be to God that He is not like us. He is unchangeable and loves us with an eternal love because we have trusted in His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the unchanging promise that God loves us with an everlasting love, no matter what our spiritual condition as Christians may be.

“I have loved you with an everlasting love . . .” (Jer. 31:3)

Occasionally a Christian will be tempted by the devil to doubt his salvation. However, the Christian knows that God is faithful.

“Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his.” (2 Tim. 2:19)

“If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself.” (2 Tim. 2:13)

God must be faithful to His promise and He will never cast us out of salvation. The devil’s temptations can never rob us of our salvation in Christ because God is unchanging in His promises.

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” (John 6:37)

There will come into every Christian's life times of suffering and crisis, and he can cling to God's unchanging promise that it will somehow work together for good.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:28)

Think of it! God takes the constantly changing world, which is a threat to the unbeliever, and uses it for the believer's good. Those who have been called to salvation according to God's sovereign purpose know that He has sovereign control over all circumstances. What a comfort!

What a comfort it is to know, also, that God does not compromise. He does not need to be coaxed or bribed. God does not change. In all our efforts to find God, to please Him, to commune with Him, we should remember that all change must be on our part. We must change to conform to God's will. He will never change to conform to man's will.

An unchanging God answers the prayers of His people. God is not like a man, for He never alters or fluctuates. When we come to God in prayer, we know that His attitude towards us is the same now as it was in eternity past and will be in eternity to come. In coming to Him in prayer, we need not wonder whether we will find Him in a receptive mood. He is always receptive to our prayers and willing to consider them and answer them according to His will.

Because God is immutable, we know He can and does answer prayer when we ask according to His will.

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." (1 John 5:14)

We have been given the right to ask for any and all things, and we know that if any of these things are God's will we shall have them. We have a God who answers prayer; therefore, we must make all of our needs, desires and wants known to Him. Let God determine whether it is His will for you to have your requests. Your task is to believe God and make your requests known to Him.

Someone may say, "What is the use of praying to God when His will is already fixed?" First, God has told us to pray (Luke 18:1). Since He told us to pray, then prayer is important and we must practice it. Second, prayer is a means to bring about God's sovereign ends. When we pray things happen; when we do not pray, things do not happen. Third, prayer does not change God or His secret will, but it does change the believer's relationship to and attitude toward the plan of God, making him wholly dependent upon God for results. Fourth, prayer is acknowledging God's sovereign rule over the wills of men and He alone must move the wills of men if they are to be saved.

We must never come to the place where we think our prayers are not having any affect on God or are in no way moving Him to action. A classic example is Hezekiah who prayed for God to grant him a longer life after God had pronounced that he was going to die, and God granted the request (2 Kings 20:1-6a). Did God change His plan? He did not change His secret plan but from Hezekiah's standpoint God willed a change, for Hezekiah believed that God is the Eternal Now.

GOD'S IMMUTABILITY AND THE UNSAVED

For those who are unsaved, who know not Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior, they must realize that God is unchangeable. Those who defy God, break His laws, reject His Son and have no concern for His glory, must not think for a moment that God will have mercy on them in eternity. God will judge them.

“Therefore I will deal with them in anger; I will not look on them with pity or spare them. Although they shout in my ears, I will not listen to them.” (Ezek. 8:18)

God is unchangingly holy and He hates all sin and sinners. God hates sin eternally, for sin is contrary to His perfect character. But God is also unchanging love and He loves all sinners who are in Christ, for Christ is God's answer to the sin problem. Those who die in their sins without a Savior shall face the wrath of an unchanging God in eternity.

CONCLUSION

God is unchanging. From the beginning, God has promised in the Covenant of Grace to save all who trust in Christ as a personal Lord and Savior. God has saved, is saving, and will continue to save men only on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ.

The unchanging God has made an unchanging promise.

“Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.” (John 3:36)

God cannot lie or go back on His word. I plead with all of you who do not know Christ—trust Christ and have eternal life!