

WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT GOD?

Part three - The Attributes of God and their Application to Daily Living

Wednesday, May 19th, 2021 - 7 p.m.

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"AS THOU HAST BEEN, THOU FOREVER WILL BE" - God's Immutability (Unchangeability)

The theologians and technicians call it God's *immutability*. In the last teaching we saw God is *eternal*. But He's much more than that. He's not just *eternal* in terms of *duration of existence*, He's *consistent* in terms of nature and being. In other words, not only does He exist *forever*, He is always, eternally *the same in nature*.

This is not true of us. Time doesn't just *age* us. It *changes* us in so many ways. Our bodies lose strength. Our minds grow dull. Our senses diminish. So not only are we *not* eternal, but the time we are given *affects constant change in our lives*. Children are *immature*. Teenagers are frequently *impulsive*. We've all seen, at least occasionally, an even tempered man or woman turn *rigid and grumpy in old age*.

In our short lives we say things and live to regret saying them. We frequently have to *"eat our words."* Healthy people get sick. Young people get old. Foolish people can become wise. Wise people can become senile. Rich become poor. And on it goes. The circle of life only *sounds* beautiful in the song. The circle is actually a very *painful* experience.

Again, this endless condition of *human flux* is a divinely given marker - a proof that we are *not* God. Here's another way in which the difference between the *creature* and the *Creator* is indelibly stamped. In *mankind* change is *inevitable*. In *God* it is *impossible*.

This changing state in man has always been a great source of frustration.

A.W.Tozer says, *"Neither the creature is fixed nor his world, but he and it are in constant flux. Each one appears for a little while to laugh and weep, to work and play, and then to go to make room for those who shall follow him in the never-ending cycle."*

It's against this background of man's *changeability* that God's *unchangeableness* (His *immutability*) shines so beautifully. Some verses are almost too big for us to properly handle. To study them intently is like trying examining at the end of your nose without a mirror - you're familiar with it, but

it makes you dizzy to stare at it too long:

Psalm 102:25-28 - "Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. [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, [27] but you are the same, and your years have no end. [28] The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you."

Take special note of **verse 27** - "...but you are the same, and your years have no end." This verse announces **two** concepts, not **one**. The second - "...and your years have no end," proclaims God's endless, eternal existence. We've already studied this. The first, "...but you are the **same**," signals God's **unchangeability**. He is **always** the same.

But even here, we must tread carefully. There are many theologians - "**open theists**," they are often called - who don't celebrate God's unchangeability. They fear we are making God too **statue-like**, incapable of genuine love or passion.

But this is not the unchangeability of God as portrayed in the Scriptures. God isn't unchanging as a **stone** is unchanging. He is unchanging in a **beautiful** way, not a **static** way. He is constantly faithful, constantly holy, constantly loving, constantly wrathful against sin, and constantly dependable. In short, He is **constantly** Himself - constantly **self-consistent**.

It is in **this** sense, not a **static** sense, that God is, with great poetic accuracy, pictured as a **rock** in the Scriptures. One of my very favorite such references is **Deuteronomy 32:3-4** - "For I will proclaim the name of the Lord; ascribe greatness to our God! [4] "The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."

In fact, a great indication of the health of your spiritual appetite is the sense of wonder and joy that fills your heart as you ponder this truth. If this **tires** you, all is not well in the basement of your soul. You see, down through the centuries, the hearts of devout saints have always taken refuge in the unchangeable nature of God:

Henry F. Lyte in his classic hymn "**Abide With Me**" wrote - "**Swift to its close ebbs out life's little**

day, Earth's joys grow dim; its glories fade away. Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me."

Thomas O. Chisholm in "Great is Thy Faithfulness" - "*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father, There is no shadow of turning with Thee; Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not; As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.*"

What deep words! What are these men praying in these familiar words? They are saying they have found the **cure** for the great sickness of fleeting stability in mankind. They are saying they've found a rock, an anchor, a resting place - word it any way you like - they are saying this is something about God that needs to be entered into and meditated upon.

How we benefit from the unchangeable nature of God? I have five thoughts to ponder. We'll do one tonight and four next Wednesday.

- 1) **BECAUSE THE REACH OF GOD'S GRACE IS CREATED BY HIS UNCHANGING REVELATION IN JESUS CHRIST, RATHER THAN THE REWARD OF OUR MERIT, THERE IS HIGH AND SOLID HOPE FOR SALVATION FOR EVERYONE**

Hebrews 7:25 - "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them."

"Save to the uttermost..." I'm in that group. If the hinges of God's mercy are to be pushed open from **my** side of the gate I have no grounds of **hope**, let alone **assurance**. But if it's God's **nature** - His nature that will outlast the rise and fall of a thousand Mount Everests - if it's **that** strong nature of God to extend saving grace to the **"uttermost"** I can face eternity with confidence. This is why we sing, **"His blood can make the foulest clean."** It's God's unchanging **nature** upon which this statement stands.

Let me make this point as strongly as possible. Let no one, in the church or out of the church, whatever accusation is leveled against you, whatever gossip you hear, however cruel or unforgiving Christian people can sometimes be - let no one ever doubt for a moment that if you come honestly in thorough, Scriptural repentance - if you turn completely from your sin and

solidly rely on Christ in faith - let no one hinder you from expecting new life, new hope, and new beginning in Christ Jesus. We stand on this, not because our **"Statement of Faith"** says so. We are dealing with the **nature of God** here. He is still the great Sanctifier of the dirty, the broken and the lost. He is **unchangeable** in this.

One final thought here: one of the deadliest forms of **forgetfulness** of this truth of the **unchangeability** of God manifests itself when people **neglect** the solid unchanging grace of God because of **their own** frustration over their spiritual ups and downs. Remember, while it is **good** to feel remorse for your sin, it is **bad** to shrink God's unchanging nature down to the size of your fluctuating spiritual efforts.

There may be many people in the church who need to **re-believe**, all over again, in the incredible power of redemption, **not** because of the power of positive thinking or some kind of psychological manipulation of human emotion, but because of the **eternally unbending nature of the Being who is God. More on this next week.**