

Discussion 9

# GOD IS IMMUTABLE

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January 1, 2020

# GOD IS IMMUTABLE

“Immutability means not having the ability to change.” This is a very important characteristic of God because it affects all His other characteristics. By nature, God is absolutely unchanging. For this reason, the attributes He possessed before the creation of the world are the same ones He has today. Psalm 90:2 says that *Before the mountains were born Or You gave birth to the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God*. Malachi 3:6 says, “*For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed*.”

When we say that God is omniscient, that “He knows all things,” it means He will always know all things. When we say He is loving, that means He will always be loving and always act in accordance with His love, even if that includes discipline.

Our God is always the same; He is unchangeable in His character.

Here are a few texts that describe this:

- *Psalm 102:25–27 “Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands.26 “Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.27 “But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.*

Listen to what God said through Malachi 3:6: “*I the LORD do not change*”.

As we look at God, who is unchangeable, this certainly reflects a characteristic which we as humans do not share, for we are always changing. We are always growing in knowledge and wisdom. Our bodies are always changing with age or with every meal, but God never changes.

Sometimes, the fact that we are always changing makes it difficult to understand one another, even in the closest unions such as marriage. How can you really know someone completely if he or she is always changing?

This may make it hard to know or understand one another, but it makes it easier to know God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever (*Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever*).

God does not change, and therefore, we can trust that He will always act in accordance with His characteristics. Now with this said, there are some texts that would seem to indicate that God changes.

- *Genesis 6:5–7 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”*

The KJV actually says He repented. Doesn't this sound like God changed His mind? He made men, and now, He is going to destroy them.

Certainly, we see God changing His mind, but only in accord with His characteristics. God is a holy God, and because He wants holiness, He will bring discipline or judgment. We see this characteristic throughout Scripture. One time, we see Him pronounce judgment on the city of Nineveh in the book of Jonah, and when they repented, He has mercy and removes the judgment (Jonah 3).

This does not contradict God's immutability, but it is a reflection of it. God is both holy and merciful. He always acts in accordance with His characteristics. This is true because *If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself. (2 Tim 2:13)*. God does not change like the shifting shadows (*James 1:17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.*)

Not only is God unchangeable in His person, but He is unchangeable in His sovereign plans. Listen to what He says in *Psalm 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.*

*The plans of His heart from generation to generation.* His sovereign plans stand firm because our Lord does not change in His person and His characteristics. These plans include things like prophecy.

Jesus declares that no one is good except for God alone. Christ says this to help the rich man recognize that Christ was actually God, and therefore, the only way to eternal life. In saying that only God is good, Christ essentially is saying that God is the definition of good.

Therefore, it is by looking at God that we can determine if anything is truly good at all. This is very similar to how John declares that God is love (*1 John 4:8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love*). We cannot know what love is unless we know God. In the same way, we cannot know what is good unless we compare it to God. As Grudem said, *"God is the standard of what is good and everything He does is worthy of approval."*

In fact, Scripture would declare that God's goodness is the sum total of His characteristics. We see this in the story of Moses asking to see God's glory. Look at what Exodus 33:18–19 says: *Then Moses said, "I pray You, show me Your glory!"<sup>19</sup> And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show compassion on whom I will show compassion."*

God tells Moses that He will grant his request to see the LORD's glory. He will do this by causing His "goodness" to pass in front of him.

What does God's goodness look like? It is described in Exodus 34:5–7. *The LORD descended in the cloud and stood there with him as he called upon the name of the LORD.<sup>6</sup> Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;<sup>7</sup> who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin; yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations."*

The goodness of God is described in verses 6 and 7. It mentions His compassion, His grace, His patience (slow to anger), His love and faithfulness, and even His wrath. Everything that God does is good, and therefore, His goodness can summarize the rest of God's characteristics. We worship a God that is loving, patient, and compassionate simply because He is good. Even His wrath is a reflection of His goodness. Every person God loves, He disciplines (*Hebrews 12:6<sup>6</sup> FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.*"). Everything God does is good.

This truth is a challenge to those who question God's goodness when they consider the many bad things that happen in life.

They say, "Why does God allow bad things if He is good? Why do innocent people die if God is good?"

It should be known that tsunamis, flooding, famine, government corruption, murder, family discord, etc., were never part of God's original plan. God did not create the earth with problems. When He finished His creation, He declared that it was very good (*Genesis 1:31 God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day*).

It was not until sin came into the world that the earth developed its current problems. Therefore, the evil in creation must be attributed to someone other than God. He is sovereign and in control of everything, but evil cannot be attributed to Him (*James 1:13 Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am being tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone.*). Although God is not the author of evil, He nonetheless uses all things, including evil, for His glory.

We need two things no matter the crisis we're facing:

- (1) a God who can empathize with you as a high priest and hates sin.
- (2) And you need a God in that moment who is totally sovereign and governing all things so that even the sin being done against you is folded into His purposes for you and you can shine like the sun someday even in spite of the loss and pain. Both of those are needs God meets.

For example, Christ said He is coming back to take His people to Himself (*John 14:3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also*). God said that in the end times, there will be tremendous wars and natural disasters right before Christ's coming

- *Matt 24:7 For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes.*
- *Rev 6:12-13 I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; <sup>13</sup> and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.*

At His coming, people will be separated from one another and sent either into everlasting punishment or into everlasting life (*Matthew 25:46 These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*). We can trust these prophecies. His immutability means that we can trust the prophecies and plans He has shared with us in Scripture.

Not only is God unchanging in His sovereign plans, but He is unchanging in His promises. Look at *Numbers 23:19: "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent; Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"*

This means we can trust every promise He has in Scripture because He is unchangeable. He is unchangeable in His person, in His plans, and His promises to us.

Does He promise to save you if you put your trust in the Son (*Romans 10:13 for "WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED."*)? Then you can trust Him. Does He promise to forgive your sins (*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*) He will forgive. Does He promise to guide you throughout life as your shepherd (*Psalms 23*)? You can trust He will lead and guide you in the right paths because He is unchangeable; He is immutable.

This characteristic of God gives us great comfort. We can trust Him because He doesn't change like man does.