

# **Our Faithful, Unchanging God**

**Selected Scriptures**

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In our last study together on the doctrine of God, we looked at the existence and nature of God. In the existence of God we said that it is assumed in the Scriptures. William Evans, in his book *Great Doctrines of the Bible*, says, “It does not seem to have occurred to any of the writers of either the Old or the New Testaments to attempt to prove or to argue for the existence of God. Everywhere and at all times it is a fact taken for granted.” That fact is also seen in His creation. Psalm 19:1-2 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, And night unto night reveals knowledge.” Theologians often use theological terms that we’re unfamiliar with but none the less often state truths in a concise way. I gave you six arguments that theologians use to prove the existence of God. The first was the teleological argument which says design implies a designer. When you look at something that has been finished or perfected, we conclude its resulting design must have had a designer. The second argument was ontological, which comes from a Greek participle “to be.” This argument reasons that man’s ability to conceive of an absolutely perfect Being implies the reality and existence of that Being. The third was aesthetical. Because there is beauty and truth in the world, it is logical to assume that somewhere in the universe is a standard upon which beauty and truth are based. A fourth argument is volitional. Because man faces a myriad of choices and exercises volition, it is logical to assume that there must be an infinite will somewhere. The world exists as an expression of that will. The fifth argument is moral. This argument says that since we know there is a right and wrong this suggests the necessity of an absolute standard. And the sixth argument is cosmological. Cosmology is the argument of cause and effect. The world and the universe exist, and we conclude that someone made it.

We said that the cause of limitless space must be infinite; the cause of endless time must be eternal; the cause of perceptual motion must be powerful; the cause of complexity must be omniscient; the cause of consciousness must be personal; the cause of feeling must be emotional; the cause of will must be volitional; the cause of ethical values must be moral; the cause of religious values must be spiritual; the cause of beauty must be aesthetical; the cause of righteousness must be holy; the cause of justice must be just; the cause of love must be loving; the cause of life must be living. Our world give evidence that there must be a God who is the cause of all those qualities.

We also looked at the nature of God. This is where we examined more closely what the Bible reveals about the Person of God. We said that there are two ways to look at this: according to man and according to the Bible. When you look at it according to man, you come up when man created God in his own image. But when you look at the Bible, you see something entirely different. The Bible reveals that God is a Person, who is described by personal titles, personal pronouns, and personal characteristics. It also reveals that God is a Spirit which refers to Him as being immaterial. Charles Hodge says “in revealing...that God is Spirit, the Bible reveals to us that no attribute of matter can be predicated of the divine essence” (Systematic Theology, 138-9).

We further said that God is One and Three. As One, He is the only God. There are no other gods besides Him. As three, He exists as three distinct persons and we saw those distinctions in the Old and New Testament.

Tonight, we are beginning a study of the attributes of God.

When we refer to the attributes of God, we are referring to the “Virtues, excellencies, and perfections of God” (Tyndale Bible Dictionary). James P. Boyce, in his *Abstract of Systematic Theology*, says, “The

attributes of God are those peculiarities which mark or define the mode of His existence, or which constitute His character. They are not separate nor separable from His essence or nature, and yet are not that essence, but simply have the ground or cause of their existence in it, and are at the same time the peculiarities which constitute the mode and character of His being” (65). In other words, they are the “Inherent characteristics of God revealed in Scripture and..are characteristics equally of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Tyndale Bible Dictionary). The one that we are considering tonight is referred to as His immutability. A.W. Pink says of this attribute: “This is one of the Divine perfections which is not sufficiently pondered. It is one of the excellencies of the Creator which distinguishes Him from all His creatures. God is perpetually the same: subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations” (The Attributes of God). Malachi 3:6 says, “For I am the Lord, I do not change.”

As we look at this attribute, I want us to see it in 4 ways as it pertains to God.

First, I want us to see that *God's Life Does Not Change*.

## I. God's Life Does Not Change

### A. He Has Always Been

1. In Psalm 93:2, the psalmist says, "Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting."
2. In Ps.102:25-27, he says, "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 endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment; Like a cloak You will change them, And they will be changed. 27 But You are the same, And Your years will have no end."

"Created things have a beginning and an ending, but not so their Creator" (J.I. Packer, Knowing God).

"There never was a time when He was not; there never will come a time when He shall cease to be. God has neither evolved, grown, nor improved. All that He is today, He has ever been, and ever will be" (A.W. Pink, The Attributes of God).

3. When referring to God, Paul calls Him "the immortal God" (Romans 1:23; 1 Tim.6:16)
4. God asks Job in Job 38:4-7, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. 5 Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? 6 To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, 7 When the morning stars sang together, And all the sons of God shouted for joy?"

### B. He Will Always Be

1. In Heb.1:10-12 a combination of these references already mentioned are used of God the Son like Ps.102:25-27; Isa.34:4; 50:9; 51:6

Verse 8 begins by noting to us that the writer of Hebrews is referring to the Son ("But to the Son He says")

Verses 10-12 says, "And: 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.'"

2. In Heb.13:8 he says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

He never changes because He is God the Son.

3. In Rev.4:9-10 there is a phrase used two times showing that there is no end with God. He lives "forever."

It says, “Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne.”

### C. He is From All Eternity

1. Moses said in Ps.90:2 that He is “from everlasting to everlasting.”
2. That phrase is repeated in Ps.106:48 when the psalmist says, “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting!”
3. Jeremiah 10:10 refers to Him as “the eternal King.”
4. In Micah 5:2 we have the term “everlasting” used in reference to Jesus, which is quoted in Mat.2:6:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.”

## II. God’s Character Does Not Change

A.W. Pink says, “Whatever the attributes of God were before the universe was called into existence, they are precisely the same now, and will remain so forever. Necessarily so; for they are the very perfections, the essential qualities of His being. Semper idem (always the same) is written across every one of them. His power is unabated, His wisdom undiminished, His holiness unsullied. The attributes of God can no more change than Deity can cease to be. His veracity is immutable, for His Word is "forever settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). His love is eternal: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3) and "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). His mercy ceases not, for it is "everlasting" (Ps. 100:5)” (The Attributes of God).

### A. That is Reflected in His Name

1. In Exodus 3:14 God discloses His name to Moses as “I Am Who I Am” which is the definition of the Hebrew Yahweh.

“This sacred name is known as the tetragrammaton (‘four letters’). English Jehovah comes from the Hebrew YHWH,...The Jews consider YHWH too sacred to utter. The name proclaims God as self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, and sovereign” (MacDonald, W., & Farstad, A. Believer's Bible Commentary).

“This name is not a description of God, but simply a declaration of His self-existence and his eternal changelessness” (J.I. Packer, Knowing God).

2. In Ex.34:5-7 we read how God proclaim YHWH to Moses by listing the various facets of His holy character

“Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. 6 And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, 7 keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.”

## B. That is Reflected in His Nature

James said in Jas.1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.”

“The celestial bodies God created have various phases of movement and rotation, changing from hour to hour and varying in intensity and shadow. God, however, is changeless” (John MacArthur, James).

A. W. Pink again says, “He cannot change for the better, for He is already perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse. Altogether unaffected by anything outside Himself, improvement or deterioration is impossible. He is perpetually the same” (The Attributes of God).

God's unchanging character sets Him apart from everyone and everything.

1. The heavens are subject to change

They move about, following their courses. The Book of Revelation gives us a drastic picture of the extreme changes the heavens will undergo until fire eventually dissolves them. The stars will fall, the sun will go out, the moon will turn a bloody hue, and the heavens will roll up like a scroll.

2. The earth also is subject to change

People have been changing the face of the earth with their bulldozers and the atmosphere with pollution. The Book of Revelation says that in the end times both people and plant life will die and the seas will be polluted. The earth was changed once by a flood; it will be changed again as it is consumed with intense heat (2 Peter 3:6-7).

3. The ungodly are subject to change

Unbelievers now think they have a happy or at least an acceptable life. But one day they will realize that an eternity without God is a tragic existence.

4. Angels are also subject to change, for some "did not keep their own domain, but

abandoned their proper abode" (Jude 1:6). Those beings are demons.

#### 5. Even believers change

There are times when our love for Christ burns and we obey Him, but there are other times when it smolders and we disobey. On the one hand, David trusted the Lord as his Rock and Refuge (2 Sam. 22:3); on the other hand, he feared for his life, saying, "I will perish one day by the hand of Saul" (1 Sam. 27:1). Everyone and everything in the universe changes. But not God! (Taken from *Our Awesome God* by John MacArthur, 34-5).

### III. God's Truth Does Not Change

#### A. God's Word Does Not Change Because it is Truth

1. Jesus said in John 17:17, "Your word is truth."
2. As being the truth, it is perfect
  - a) Ps.19:7 - "The law of the Lord is perfect."

b) Ps.19:9 says, "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

"The words of human beings are unstable things. But not so the words of God. They stand forever, as abidingly valid expressions of His mind and thought. No circumstances prompt Him to recall them; no changes in His own thinking require Him to amend them" (J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*).

#### B. God's Word Stands Forever

1. Isa.40:8 says, "the word of our God stands forever."
2. Peter says in 1 Pet.1:23 that "the word of God...lives and abides forever" and quotes Isa.40:6-8
3. Num.23:19 says, "God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent."
4. Gen.6:6-7 seems to indicate that God does change when it says, "And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. 7 So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them."

The question is "Whose character changed?" God's or man?

God's character did not change. He created people to do good, but instead they changed and chose to do evil.



5. Jon.3:10 tells us when God saw the inhabitants of Nineveh turn from their sin, He “relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it.”

The question again should be asked, “Whose character changed?” Not God. He showed mercy to the Nineveh not because He Himself repented, but because the people did.

Louis Berkhof said, “There is change round about Him [God], change in the relations of men to Him, but there is no change in His Being, His attributes, His purpose, His motives of action, or His promises. . . . If Scripture speaks of His repenting, changing His intention, and altering His relation to sinners when they repent, we should remember that this is only an anthropopathic way of speaking. In reality the change is not in God, but in man and in man's relations to God” (Systematic Theology [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941], p. 59).

James Montgomery Boice says, “Repenting means to revise one’s plan of action, but God never does so. His plans are made on the basis of perfect knowledge, and his perfect power sees to their accomplishment” (Foundations of the Christian Faith, 145).

6. Ps.33:11 says, “The counsel of the Lord stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.”
7. Isa.14:24 says, “The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, "Surely, as I have thought, so it shall come to pass, And as I have purposed, so it shall stand.”
8. Isa.46:9-10 says, “Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.”
9. Prov.19:21 says, “There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the Lord's counsel--that will stand.”

God’s truth never changes because God never changes. It is perfect just as He is perfect. It needs no additions or corrections. It remains the same.

#### **IV. God’s Ways Do Not Change**

##### **A. God Continues to Act the Same Toward Sinners**

1. He warns them
  - a) Gen.2:16-17 - “And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

- b) John 8:23-24 - “And He said to them, "You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.”
- c) Rev.8:13 - “And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”
- d) At the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> trumpet, Rev.9:20-21 says, “But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk. 21 And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

## 2. He calls them to repentance

- a) In Mark 1:15 Jesus said, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”
- b) Paul said in Acts 17:30 - “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

Some God causes “to hear the gospel while others do not hear it, and moving some of those who hear it to repentance while leaving others in their unbelief, thus teaching His saints that He owes mercy to none and that it is entirely of His grace, not at all through their own effort, that they themselves have found life” (J. I. Packer, Knowing God).

Romans 9:15-18 says, “For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion." 16 So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. 17 For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, "For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." 18 Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens.”

Since God continues to act the same way toward sinners by warning and calling them to repentance, then it is obvious to say that:

## B. God Continues to Provide Redemption Through His Son

- 1. Peter says of Christ that “He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet.1:20).
- 2. Gen.3:15 says, “And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.”
- 3. Gal.4:4-5 says, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born

of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

4. Jesus is the only “way, the truth, and the life” (Jn.14:6).
5. There is “no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).
6. When Jesus “had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb.1:3) indicating that His work was finished.

## **CONCLUSION**

There is great comfort in the doctrine of the immutability of God. His promises include a salvation for believers that is eternal. That means He will faithfully manifest His love, forgiveness, mercy, and grace toward us forever! God reassuringly says, "The mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, but My loving-kindness will not be removed from you, and My covenant of peace will not be shaken" (Isa. 54:10). This is the faithful, unchanging God you can trust completely. He will always be true to His Word and fulfill all His promises. It's no wonder Christ said, "Have faith in God" (Mark 11:22). He was saying, "You can trust God. You can put your life in His hands." May the Lord help you do just that! Let me close with one more thought from A.W. Pink: “Human nature cannot be relied upon; but God can! However unstable I may be, however fickle my friends may prove, God changes not. If He varied as we do, if He willed one thing today and another tomorrow, if He were controlled by caprice, who could confide in Him? But, all praise to His glorious name, He is ever the same. His purpose is fixed, His will is stable, His word is sure. Here then is a rock on which we may fix our feet, while the mighty torrent is sweeping away everything around us. The permanence of God's character guarantees the fulfillment of His promises” (The Attributes of God, p. 39). Let’s pray!