

GOD: ETERNAL AND IMMUTABLE

Since everything on Earth is transient and uncertain, the Christian finds great hope and consolation in God's eternal and immutable nature, something the Scriptures clearly declare.

"From everlasting to everlasting, You are God" (Psa. 90:2b).

"You are the same, and Your years have no end" (Psa. 102:27b).

The phrases "everlasting to everlasting" and "Your years have no end" express God's *eternal* nature.

The phrases "You are God" and "You are the same" express His *immutable* nature. So...

Our God is both eternal and unchanging, and this is our subject.

Firstly, God's Character Doesn't Change.

People change.

Men are molded by time and experiences: in the course of a lifetime a person's tastes, outlook, and temperament change, sometimes radically.

Since people change, we can't be certain that they'll behave the same way toward us in the future as they act toward us today. But...

God doesn't change.

He revealed His name to Moses on Sinai, and by the name "YHWH" (Yahweh) His immutability was revealed: Exodus 3:14 has God saying, "I am who I am."

God's character never varies: He never becomes less truthful, less merciful, less just, or less holy than He has ever been; the character of God is, and always will be, exactly what it was in biblical times.

His actions toward us are always consistent with His immutable character.

He has one way of reacting toward sin and another way of reacting toward obedience; these ways never change. Moses said...

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God.... But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord your God to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you" (Deu. 28:1-2 & 15). And...

In the New Testament, let's read Second Thessalonians 1:3-8.

Since God always acts consistently with His unchanging character, then, when an individual changes his actions, God changes His actions toward that individual: "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? says the Lord God, and not that he should turn from his ways and live? But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die" (Eze. 18:20-24). So...

When it's said in the Bible that God repents, it signifies that someone (or more than one) has left Him, and God must, therefore, change His mind toward that person or people in order to remain consistent with His immutable character.

Moses wrote that "it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart" (Gen. 6:6, KJV).

God told Samuel, "It repenteth Me that I have set up Saul as king, for he is turned back from following Me and hath not performed My commandments" (1 Sam. 15:11a, KJV).

Samuel recorded how that "the Lord repented Him of the evil (of destroying the Israelites) and said to the angel that destroyed the people, 'It is enough; stay now thine hand'" (2 Sam. 24:16b, KJV).

Concerning Nineveh the Bible says, "God saw ... that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said He would do to them, and He did it not" (Jonah 3:10, KJV).

God's immutable nature is, therefore, to our advantage. So...

We should know or do the following.

God doesn't change, but people do: When God is said to repent, there's no indication of wrongdoing on His part, but simply an indication that a person or people sinned, and God must, therefore, change His attitude toward him or them.

Sinners should tremble: God's unchanging character doesn't allow Him to play favorites, so His wrath toward sin is immutable; sinners must, therefore, repent to be saved. And...

Saints should rejoice: God's unchanging character is an assurance of His favor as long as we remain faithful to Him.

Secondly, God's Truth Doesn't Change.

The words of men are unstable.

The supposed truths of previous generations are often revised or completely cast aside as new supposed truth is discovered.

Promises are made which can't be fulfilled or were not initially intended to be kept. But...

The words of God are stable.

God's truth is eternal because He possesses all wisdom and all power.

The words of men are unstable because they don't understand all wisdom and because they don't possess sufficient power to fulfill their promises.

God isn't like man who is limited in power, so He has the means to establish His words eternally: "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? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good" (Num. 23:19)?

God's principles of moral conduct are timeless because they're based on His immutable character.

We must be holy because God is holy: God Himself said, "Be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16).

We must love because God is love: John said that "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

We must be merciful because God is merciful: Jesus said to "Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

The moral truths of the Bible aren't relics of some by-gone age, but are eternally valid for all generations.

David wrote, "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled" (Psa. 119:89).

Isaiah taught that generations come and go, but God's Word stands forever (40:6-8).

God's promises won't fail for they're based on His unfailing Word, not the faithlessness of man.

In the days of Malachi, the Jewish nation had proven itself unfaithful to God: the priests showed partiality, divorce was rampant, and intermarriage with the heathen was common.

But God had promised the Messiah to come through Judah, so Judah was preserved because of God's faithfulness: "I am the Lord, I do not change, therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob" (Mal. 3:6).

Mockers will cast doubt on God's promises in order to prove His unfaithfulness, while unknown to them, it's by the very faithfulness of His Word that the world exists and is preserved to the present day (2 Pet. 3:3-7). So...

We should do the following.

Hold to divine truth: God's text-book never needs revising.

Build the houses of our lives on the rock of eternal truth: there's no stronger foundation than the moral principles of the Bible. And...

Stand on the promises of God: the Scriptures can't be broken, as Jesus said in John 10:35; nothing can render God's eternal truth void.

Thirdly, God's Purposes Don't Change.

Man makes his plans, but unforeseen events may stop him in his goals; this isn't so with God: His eternal nature gives His plans stability.

God deals with man within the realm of time, but He Himself isn't limited to the present as man is: being eternal, God transcends all the limitations of time.

"With the Lord, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. 3:8). In other words...

To God, eternity is a small period between two vast infinities.

Since God is independent of time, He can see the end from the beginning, and His purposes, devised in eternity past, can't, therefore, fail.

"Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, 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,' calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9-11).

David wrote, "The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations" (Psa. 33:11).

The change in covenants was a part of God's eternal purpose.

Jeremiah foretold a change in covenants (Heb. 8:8-12).

Jesus foretold a change in worship (John 4:21-24).

The church and everything associated with it was, therefore, a part of God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9-11). So...

We should know and do the following.

The death of Christ wasn't a mistake, and the church wasn't an after-thought.

Have assurance—our hope in Heaven is a part of God's unchangeable purpose (Heb. 6:17-19).

Lastly, Like God the Father, His Son Doesn't Change.

Paul affirmed that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

This fact gives us assurance of His continued power to save: His sacrifice and His shed blood still possesses its ancient power; and we should find great consolation in this fact (Heb. 7:23-25).

His faithfulness to us stirs us to persevere faithfully through times of pain and difficulty (the very theme of Hebrews).

Conclusion

The accomplishments of man tend to inflate his ego, but two unyielding truths continue to reveal his insignificance.

Everything now in existence will someday cease to exist.

All the planning, expense, and effort exhausted by man will end in nothing.

The transient nature of man's work leaves him with a sense of emptiness and futility.

The world as we know it is changing.

Nothing is secure.

The market fluctuates and thousands lose their jobs.

A new disease emerges, and the health of a nation is destroyed.

A new power arises, and the world is never the same.

Such unforeseen and uncontrollable changes fill the human race with uncertainty.

In the end, man can take no comfort in himself.

He's too temporary to extend his control beyond his own little world. And...

He's too small to control his destiny beyond his death.

This is the advantage of being a Christian.

He alone possesses hope and certainty in this world: he knows that every change in the world and in his own life is figured into God's great plan; *his* God is eternal and immutable!

If man is to find comfort among the emptiness and uncertainty of the world, he must turn his affections to the only One who is eternal and unchanging—God, and do so through His Son, Jesus Christ.