

IMMUTABILITY OF GOD

Holy and Heavenly Father, we come to You with the desire to change from what we were and what we are to what You need us to be. We know that there is no change in you and that whatever changes that need to be made must be made within us. So let us seek You and let You guide us. In Jesus' holy and precious name, Amen!

As we continue to let the lessons of A.W. Tozer guide us through the attributes of God, we make our way from one that is nearly impossible to comprehend (His eternity) to one that is more comprehensible, His immutability. To say that God is immutable is merely to say that He never differs from Himself. The concept of a growing or developing God cannot be found in scripture. As 17th century Puritan Stephen Charnock put it, "He is without any new nature, new thought, new will, new purpose or new place. God is a necessary being, He is necessarily what He is and is therefore unchangeably what He is." That is in stark contrast to humans. "Panta Rhei" is a Greek term that means life is flux and was coined by pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus (500B.C.). Heraclitus who believed in an "initial cause" (which he believed was fire, for it consumes and creates simultaneously), notably stated that "the only constant in life is change and in change we find purpose". He firmly believed that nothing is ever the same and is constantly changing, for example, with the flowing of water, the stream that you step into will not be the same stream that you step out of. The water that you touched on your way in has passed on and been replaced by different water. As a man, my facial hair is constantly growing, although I cannot see it grow it is constantly growing ever so slightly. My cup of coffee is not the same temperature that it was 30 seconds ago, so on and so forth.

God does not age, He does not weaken, He does not forget, He does not learn, everything that He is, is perfected and has always been. As there can be no mutation in the moral character of God, so there can be none within the divine essence. One who can suffer any slightest degree of change is neither self-existent, self-sufficient nor eternal, and so is not God. Psalm 102:26-27 confirms this "They will perish (the heavens) 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, but You are the same and Your years will have no end." The creations of God are born, grow, endure, adapt, obtain, fade and wither yet none of this applies to Him. He is without beginning, end and void of change or growth. He wants for nothing, is not moody, temperamental, does not remember or have new thoughts.

As discussed in previous lessons, the gods of the ancient Greeks were notorious for bickering, foul moods and spats amongst one another. Their moods, minds and attitudes changed because they were created in the image of man and that is indicative of us. The Celtic god Lugh was known to shapeshift and would take on the appearance of an old lady so that he

would not be intimidating. God does not need to be deceptive; He is not moody, He does not bicker and He doesn't deal with happiness and sadness in the manner of man. In Malachi chapter three He comforts the prophet by saying "I the Lord do not change. So, you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed." As a God of constants, He is capable and willing to sustain our struggles because they do not burden Him. In the book of Numbers, chapter 23, Moses reminds us that God does not lie, does not change His mind and that He keeps His promises. How often have we not kept our word, changed our mind or kept a promise because the circumstances changed, or we feel differently about a situation or person than we did previously?

One of the many glorious things about our Father is that He loves us just as much right now as He did before we knew Him. Amid our transgressions, He still loves us, it is a constant. The same goes for His grace, mercy, harmony, holiness, and serenity amongst other things, they never waver. How could we rely upon a God that is vulnerable, is still growing, has mood swings and so on? How could we rely upon a God that is reliant upon anything? Isaiah 46:9-11 reads like this "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.'" There is no hesitation or hint of insecurity in His words, He will do what He says He will do because He is not bound to time, circumstance or change. Anselm of Canterbury once noted that "all that God is He has always been, and all that He has been and is He will ever be". Nothing that He or the prophets have said about Him will change or be modified.

If we were to learn from the angle of comparing and contrasting, there would be no greater contrast to the immutability of God than the mutability of man. In God, there is no change, in man change is inevitable. In a way, we can find comfort in the fact that we are always changing. We have changed from a sinner to a saint. We have changed from condemned to redeemed. If we are seeking God's will we are changing daily in our relationship with Him as we continue to desire His closeness and comfort. Tozer reminds us that for human beings the whole possibility of redemption lies in their ability to change. To move across from one sort of person to another is the essence of repentance: the liar becomes the truthful, the thief honest, the lewd pure, the proud humble. The moral texture of life is altered. In Romans 6:6 the apostle Paul notes that "knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin". We are blessed with the ability to change from one "man" to another, from repulse to redemption. The old man, even at his best possesses the life of Adam, the new man has the life of God. All of this was made possible when our immutable God made the decision before the beginning of time to sacrifice His only begotten son so that we may have life. We spent years sacrificing one thing after another trying to atone for our sins and please Him, but the blood of bulls and goats lost its significance when the blood of the Paschal Lamb was shed (pg.94, Tozer). Now we

rejoice in the fact that our immutable God allows us to change and to grow so that we can embark on a relationship with Him and appreciate all that He is, was and will be; never changing.

QUESTION SECTION

1. While God cannot change, name three things that He cannot do

2. In the book of Colossians, Paul says to “put to death your members which are on the earth”. Which members is he referring to?

3. God is not needy. To say that God is impassible is to say that God is free from what?

4. What does Romans chapter 11 say about the gifts of God?

5. James 1:17 says “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”. What was James relationship with Jesus and who was his letter written to?

Philippians 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.