**Lesson 7: The Immutability of God**

James 1:17

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

The immutability of God is the doctrine that God does not change. Wayne Grudem defines immutability, “God is unchanging in his being, perfections, purposes, and promises . . . .”[[1]](#footnote-2) The Scriptures affirm the unchanging nature of God. James 1:17 states that God has “no variation or shadow due to change.” He is like the sun, fixed in the heavens, everything else moves with shifting shadows.

By nature, God cannot change because He is perfect (cf. Matt. 5:48). If something that is perfect changes, then it must become less perfect because there is no such thing as “perfecter.”Since God is perfect in His being, He cannot improve, and any change would be a change for the worse. God’s knowledge is already perfect so that He cannot learn anything new or be surprised (Job 37:16; cf. Rom. 11:33-34). His ways are perfect so that He cannot be more right (2 Sam. 22:31; cf. Deut. 32:4). His will is perfect so that He cannot make better decisions (Rom. 12:2; cf. 1 Sam. 15:29).

God’s unchanging nature also helps us to see that His promises are sure. In the Old Testament, God remained faithful to His promises to the end even in spite of Israel’s unfaithfulness (cf. Mal. 3:6). Indeed God cannot be unfaithfulness to His promises because that would go against His very nature (2 Tim. 2:13). This is the bedrock of our assurance as believers. God will not change His mind or revoke His promises. What He has said will surely come to pass.

As you read through the Bible, there seem to be passages that show God changing His mind or regretting (cf. Exod. 32:14; 1 Sam. 15:35; Joel 2:13-14; Jonah 4:1-2). How does this coincide with the fact that He is unchanging? It is that some of God’s promises are stated conditionally (“unless you repent”). These passages also show that God reacts to different situations differently. As Wayne Grudem explains, “These instances should all be understood as true expressions of God’s present attitude or intention with respect to the situation as it exists at the moment. If the situation changes, then of course God’s attitude or expression of intention will also change.”[[2]](#footnote-3)

*Questions for Discussion*

1.Everything else in creation changes. What do the following passages say concerning change in the world around us?

a. Psalm 46:1-3.

b. Daniel 2:21.

c. 1 Samuel 15:29.

2. Read Psalm 102:25-27 and Numbers 23:19. How does the immutability of God further the Creator/creature distinction?

3. Note God’s attitude toward sin and righteousness in the following passages. How do these passages help you understand better the God who does not change? How should you live in light of this understanding?

a. Psalm 5:4-6.

b. Proverbs 6:16-19.

c. Psalm 11:7.

4. Process theology teaches that God is not immutable but is constantly progressing and changing. They argue that since God cannot know the future, He is constantly learning and reacting to events in time. From what you have read in this lesson, how would you respond to this aspect of process theology biblically?

5. In what ways is the immutability of God relevant to the gospel message?

**O God, Our Help in Ages Past**

O God, our help in ages past,

Our hope for years to come,

Our shelter from the stormy blast,

And our eternal home!

Under the shadow of Thy throne

Thy saints have dwelt secure;

Sufficient is Thine arm alone,

And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,

Or earth received her frame,

From everlasting Thou art God,

To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight

Are like an evening gone;

Short as the watch that ends the night

Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,

Bears all its sons away;

They fly, forgotten, as a dream

Dies at the op’ning day.

O God, our help in ages past,

Our hope for years to come,

Be Thou our guide while life shall last,

And our eternal home.

*Thoughts for Application*

1. What are some of the most significant changes that occurred in your life in the past year?

2. What are some ways the immutability of God encourages you?

3.What would it mean if God could change in His nature? What would it mean if God could change in His purposes or promises?

4. If God does not change in His purposes, why should we pray? Does prayer change God? What does prayer accomplish?

5. Write out a short prayer of thanks to God for His unchanging nature, perfections, purposes, and promises.

1. Grudem, 163. Wayne Grudem also argues that while God is immutable, He is not impassible. In other words, God feels and expresses emotions or passions, and “he acts and feels differently in response to different situations.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ibid, 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)