

God is Not Subject to Change

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[0 : 0 0] So, last week we meditated on the incomprehensibility of God. That is simply to say that God is God and man is not. And we need to have this in mind, this fact, as we explore the attributes of God's nature, that we are not going to figure God out, but He has revealed Himself to us in these ways.

And so, today we are meditating on the immutability of God. That is that God never changes. He is unchanging. God is who He is. From Exodus chapter 3, verse 13, Moses said to God, If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers has sent me to you, and they asked me, What is His name? What shall I say to them? And God said to Moses, I am who I am. And He said, Say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you.

In Hebrew it is, Ehe Asher Ehe. I am who I am. If God were in some way changeable, He could not have said of Himself, I am who I am, or I am that I am.

He did not say, I might be who I am, or I will perhaps be what I will be. A thing that has changed is not always what it is, since it has changed from what it was.

Does that make sense? But this is not so with God. He isn't ever something that He was not. Neither will He be anything that He is not already, nor will He cease to be what He currently is, and always has been. God is who He is. Now, who among us can say that about ourselves?

[2 : 0 5] Who can say, I am who I am? I've always been that way. I always will be that way. For instance, when you get up this morning, were you what you were yesterday?

Or have you changed a little bit? Maybe a few extra gray hairs? Maybe a few less hairs? I don't know if you realize, since yesterday, your body has replaced somewhere in the region of 330 billion cells. You are not who you were yesterday. You've changed in billions of ways from who you were yesterday. You are not who you were even since you got up this morning. We are constantly changing.

How changeable are we? How changeable is this world that we live in, where we can come in and the joys of the sunshine and then hear the rain battering down and hope that we've remembered our brollies?

It is inevitable in every area of life, whether we like it or not, we live in a changeable world. Now, change isn't always a negative thing, but we are going to meditate on how good it is that God is immutable, that he cannot change. And we're also going to see how good it is that we can change. So firstly, I want to explore two reasons why God by nature never changes.

Two reasons. The first reason is that God is not subject to change. And the second reason is that God has no need to change. So firstly, God is not subject to change. So this is what James, the brother of Jesus, this is what James says in his letter, James 1.17. He says that God is the father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change, or shadow due to turning.

[4 : 08] Now imagine an old sundial on the ground with its shadow turning due to time. Or think about the planets and stars constantly turning, moving and changing all the time. But there is no shadow with God. That's what James is saying. He is pure light. There is no variation moment by moment with God.

There is no turning with God. You see, change is something that implies time. And some people would even argue that time itself is not real, but it's merely our perception of change. But God is not stuck within a system bound by time like we are. God is eternal and timeless and infinite. God is not in any way affected by time. Therefore, he is not subject to change. Now interestingly, this Greek word that James uses for turning is entropy, which is where we get the word entropy from. The German physicist Rudolf Clausius in 1865 used the same Greek word that James uses to coin the word entropy, which became central to the fundamental law of physics about the inevitability of change, the inevitability of turning or transformation in our universe. The second law of thermodynamics states that entropy always increases. It always increases. Energy always spreads out and becomes unusable. It's always moving from order to disorder, usable to unusable, always changing.

Entropy is always increasing in the universe. However, since God himself is neither subject to time, nor is he bound within the closed system of our universe, there is no entropy with God. There is no turning. That's what James is saying. Change doesn't apply to the nature of God. So God by nature is in a category where he is simply not subject to change. Second reason, God has no need to change. In Acts chapter 17, Paul informs these very religious Athenians that God is not as needy as they think he is. This is what Paul says to the men of Athens. He says, the God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in temples made by men, nor is he served by human hands as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. He needs nothing. That is to say that God is not lacking in any way at all.

As we've read from Psalm 18, as for God, his ways are perfect. There's nothing that God needs that he doesn't already have. Therefore, God has no need to change. He is perfect by nature. If God were to change, he would become less than he already is, and he would change for the worse. He would either be changing from perfect to something that is less perfect, or else a change in God would imply that God was not perfect to begin with, that there was something lacking in God in which he had to increase or change. Yet this is not the God who made himself known. Indeed, if God is changeable in this way, he wouldn't be God. He would not be God. So it's not only an attribute, it's a necessary attribute of God that he does not change. He is not like us. He isn't made up of parts.

He's simple. He's not a composite being. God is all of who he is all of the time. He's not made up of parts like us where our cells are constantly replenishing, replacing, changing. God never changes. He fully is who he is all of the time. He's not becoming. He is pure being. What the old theologians used to say is that he is pure act. Now, it may seem hard to imagine something that never changes. There are many reminders every day all around us of change and uncertainty.

[8 : 43] But let me give you an example of something that seems a little bit more reliable than the ever-changing environment and bodies that we live in. Tonight, if you look out your window—this may not work because we live in Scotland—but if you look the next time it's a clear night and you look up at the stars, see if you can spot Orion's Belt or the Pleiades. Now, I've always loved gazing at the stars, but something I only recently learned about the stars absolutely blew my mind. Now, Voyager 1 was a spacecraft that left the Earth in 1977, and now it is around 15 billion miles away.

It's just left the solar system 15 billion miles away. And as it left the solar system, in order to keep on going with its mission, it had to shut down certain systems to conserve energy.

And one of those systems was its camera. One of the last photos that the Voyager 1 took was it turned around and took a picture of the entire solar system. And in this picture, there is a tiny blue dot that is the Earth. It's like a speck of dust suspended in a sunbeam, is what Carl Sagan said.

Tiny blue dot 15 billion miles away. That's Earth. This is where we live, and it's been changing every minute of every day for thousands of years. Now, the fact that I learned that blew my mind was, if Voyager 1 was to turn its camera back on and take a picture of the stars from 15 billion miles away, the constellations would look exactly the same from there as they would here on Earth.

Isn't that incredible? That blew my mind. I don't know about you, but that blew my mind from 15... I mean, you move over here and suddenly things look different. 15 billion miles away, and the constellations would look exactly the same. Now, you might think to yourself, well, of course, the universe is vast.

[10 : 51] But the stars that we see, the constellations, are not even outside of our own galaxy. This is just in our galaxy. God says in the book of Job, who seals up the stars? Who alone stretched out the heavens? Can you bind the chains of the Pleiades or loose the cores of Orion? You see, the stars have been sealed and set in the sky, and no matter where you are on this planet, with every change that happens every day, you can look up and you can see something that doesn't seem to change. In fact, if that fact about the distance doesn't blow your mind, think about this. Throughout the entire human history, thousands of years, throughout the entire human history, the stars you see have always been where they are. Empires have risen and fallen, yet the stars that you see in the night sky today are the same constellations that King David saw when he said, the heavens declare the glory of God. The stars that me and you see in the heavens today are the same stars that Abraham saw when God said, look toward heaven and number the stars.

Isn't that incredible? The exact same patterns. The Orion, the Pleiades, they're all the same throughout the entire human history. When you see this amazing, unchanging stars, if ever there was a given, if ever there was a certainty in an ever unchanging, an ever changing world, if there ever was a certainty and ever was a given, it is the one who these stars declare. It is the God who these stars declare every day and every night when they shine. When you realize the vastness of the cosmos, don't you know that God is greater?

You cannot possibly think too much of God, but we often think too little of Him. When we consider that these finite stars, these finite stars haven't changed for the entirety of our existence, do you think that the infinite and eternal God who spoke them into being with a word is subject to change? He is not. God is who He is. Psalm 102 says, Of old you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands.

They will perish, but you will remain. They will all wear out like a garment. You will change the heavens like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end. You see, even the things in our universe that seem to be the most fixed and unchanging things can be changed by God as easily as changing a robe.

How much more confident then can we be that God Himself is not so changeable? What a good thing it is when it comes to God's goodness and God's power and God's promises that He never changes.

[14 : 02] God's mercy, He never changes. God's love, He never changes. God's justice, He's never going to change. It's such a good thing. You see, it's a good thing that God cannot change because God is already perfect.

However, we, we are far from perfect. Therefore, our changeableness is actually a good thing for us because it means that we have hope. We have hope of being changed for the better.

Now, I want you to think about this for just a second. Imagine being stuck the way that you are forever. Now, for most of us, that's a dreadful thought. For some of you who are young and in your prime, you might be like, yes. For most of us, it's a dreadful thought. I don't want to be stuck like this. I know my body. I know my mind. I do not want to be stuck like this. We feel the corruption, not only of our world, but of ourselves every single day. Yet it is through the certain unchangeable promise of God and Jesus that we have hope of being a new creation, that we have hope of having a new heart, and that we have hope of changing out of these mortal bodies and not perishing.

There is more to be said about the unchanging God. There is more to be said about all of this. If you have any questions about how God does or does not change or what you think about that, I'd be happy to talk to you. But let me finish by saying that the hope for us is Jesus Christ.

That is the hope for us, the Son of God, who by assuming a human nature made it possible for humanity to change from our corrupt state into what God originally intended. So, as Peter said of those who trust in Christ, let me finish by saying, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[16 : 05] According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. So, let us thank God for his great and unchanging love and truth and mercy and promise through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let me pray.

Heavenly Father, what a great thing it is that we can come to you. It is not because you change, but because you and your unchanging mercy and love can enable us to change for the better, that we might be able to draw close to you, that we may be able to know you through Jesus Christ, and that we may be able to come out of our corrupt state, be forgiven, be transformed, be renewed, and have life. In Jesus' name, we thank you and praise you in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Thank you.