

God's Immutability II

by Richard Owen Roberts

The immutability of God is a fundamental doctrine that establishes His unchanging nature, which is established in Scripture and reason.

Duration: 20:55

Topics: "Character Of God"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the unchanging nature of God and His plans. He uses examples from nature, such as running water uphill and running with or against the wind, to illustrate the consistency of God's actions. The preacher also highlights the distinction between how God treats the righteous and the unrighteous, comparing it to an oven that reacts differently to ice cream and cake batter. He then addresses the concept of repentance, referencing biblical passages where it is stated that God repented or was grieved. The preacher encourages the audience to seriously consider the importance of repentance and the consequences of drifting away from God.

Transcript

Now, not only is the immutability of God established in Scripture, but it's clearly arrived at through reason. When we began this series, I indicated to you that God is the first cause. He alone created all.

And as creator, he can change all. But none created him, and thus none can change him. Last week, we were looking at the eternal nature of God.

He is from everlasting to everlasting. He was never young, he will never be old. Because he is eternal, he is without change.

Now, we all know that God is infinite. That if we speak of anything we know about God, we say automatically, well, he's infinite in that. For instance, if we speak of God's knowledge, we say he has infinite knowledge.

If we speak of his holiness, it is infinite holiness. If we speak of his benevolence, it is infinite benevolence. If we speak of his power, it is infinite power.

It's without limit. It's absolutely and totally complete. Now, because God's knowledge, and power, and benevolence, and purity, and justice, etc., are all infinite, that means, now just think of this, that means that he can't have anything added to him.

You can't add to God's holiness, you can't add to his knowledge, it's already complete. And you can't take away from his knowledge or his holiness. So obviously, if it's all there, and it can't be added to or subtracted from, it must be immutable.

And it most certainly is. Now, if you'll think about change, you'll readily recognize that all change, all change, is either for the better or for the worse. I can change, I can be better than I am, or I can be worse than I am, but I cannot change without either some improvement or some worsening.

How could God change? He can't be better, and he can't be worse. He cannot change. Now, if God did change, can you imagine what the world would be like? Can you imagine living in a world where the God of the world was as sickle as the creation itself? Now, we have the natural laws of God.

They seem to be permanent, but of course the natural laws were put in place by God, and they too will change. But at least for the time being, the natural laws seem to speak of the permanency of God and the fact that God doesn't change. We rely, for instance, upon the law of gravity.

And you don't wake up in the morning, say to yourself, I wonder if the law of gravity is working today. You know that it is. God, we should remember this, God does not arrange his plan and his purpose as it goes along.

No, we do. God doesn't say to himself when he gets up in the morning, now, depending on how things go today, I'll decide what to do about tomorrow. Not at all.

Listen to these sobering words, Acts 15, 18. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Jude 4, speaking of those reprobate men who, before of old, were ordained to this condemnation.

Psalms 113, 16. Your eyes saw me, here's the psalmist speaking, get this, your eyes saw me before I was formed. Before a single one of my days took shape, they were all prepared and written in your scroll.

Did you ever notice that? Every day you live was before the beginning of the creation, prepared and written in God's scroll. He's not planning as he goes. Everything is mapped out, and he knows what's coming next.

Now, we want to be sure, however, in all of this, that we don't confuse immutability with immobility. The fact that God doesn't change doesn't mean that God doesn't ask. Now, I ask you to really put your minds in gear.

Some of you have been drifting up until now, but I want you to think seriously, please, about these following statements. Dealing with the subject of repentance, Genesis 6, 6. And it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him in his heart. 1 Samuel 15, 10, and 11.

Then came the word of the Lord unto Samuel, saying, It repented me that I have made Saul to be king, for he has turned back from following me, and he hath not performed my commandments. It also grieved Samuel, and he cried unto the Lord all night. Now, how do you reconcile those statements with a statement I read already from Numbers 23? God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent.

Or how do you reconcile those statements with this from Samuel 15, 29? There's also the strength of Israel, referring to the Lord, the strength of Israel, will not lie nor repent, for he is not a man that he should

repent. Or with a statement in Romans 11, 29, the gift and the calling of God are without repentance. How is it that God can say, on one hand, I repent, and on the other hand, I'm not like man, I don't repent? You want to examine this and think seriously about it.

Consider the passage in Samuel about Saul, the king. Who came? Or consider the passage I read in Genesis, where God said, Repent me that I made man. Who came? God or man? Well, if you think about the passages, you'll remember that Saul was a goodly man who loved truth and righteousness when he was ordained to be king.

Did he say? Did he say? There is no way that God can be holy, and at the same time treat a righteous man and an unrighteous man the same way. And if a person is righteous and becomes unrighteous, obviously God's treatment of them must change. In order to be holy, in order to be holy, God must treat the righteous one way and the unrighteous another way.

Now, just think of this silly little illustration. Most of you have an oven in your home. Now, you know as well as I do, you can put ice cream in the oven and it will melt down.

Or you can put cake batter in the oven and it will rise up. Now, is the difference in the oven? Does the oven act one way with ice cream and another way with cake batter? No, no, the difference is not the oven. The difference is what put in the oven.

God acts one way with the righteous and another way with the unrighteous. God acts one way when we're right and another way when we're wrong. And in acting differently, there is no reason to suppose he is changing.

Or take these simple laws of nature. Have you ever tried to run water uphill? You know, it's immensely difficult in comparison with running it downhill. Or if you're a jogger, you know the difference between running into the wind and running with the wind.

Or if you row a boat, you know how hard it is to row against the tide in comparison with the ease with which we can flow with the tide. When God speaks of repenting, what he is really talking about is his pre-arranged plan of dealing differently with the righteous from the way he deals with the unrighteous. And we want to remember that all of God's statements of blessing in Scripture are conditional statements.

God doesn't change, but those to whom promises are given often change. And in thinking about this matter of God repenting, we would do well to remind ourselves also that it is because of our misuse of the word repentance that we get into difficulty in thinking about these passages. Now, I don't understand why, but many good men tell us that repentance is a change of mind.

You don't read that in Scripture. In Scripture, repentance is a change of direction. There are lots of people who have repented no more than in their heads.

They've had a little different thinking about sin than they used to have. They still sin. They just think differently about it.

But that's not what real repentance is. Repentance is a change of direction. We can't say that God changes his mind about sinners.

He doesn't. He's always felt the same way about sin, and the same way about sinners. What God changes is his way of dealing with them.

And this he announced in the beginning with himself. So, you see, when you consider this matter, it's really not a problem at all. And especially when you add this thought to it.

In Scripture, frequently bodily parts are ascribed to God. For instance, the eyes of the Lord are over all the earth, or underneath are the everlasting arms, or it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. God is said to ride upon the wind, and he's said to walk to and fro throughout the earth.

Now, are we to take those things literally? Does God have eyes as we know eyes, hands, arms, feet? Is God literally born on the wind? Well, obviously not. God is a spirit. But God uses language that we can come to grips with.

He describes himself figuratively, so that we can understand something of his nature. Now, when he speaks of himself as repenting, that doesn't mean that he's doing what we're talking about. If he says, I grieve, that doesn't mean that he's in a fit of passion, like we might be in the midst of grief.

But it does mean, very plainly, that God thinks clearly, and understands, and perceives, and knows where we're at, and applies universally, without exception, and without change, that plan which he ordained before the beginning of the world, to bless the righteous, and to curse the wicked. But just for the briefest moment, I ask you to think also of the issue of prayer. What does this matter of the immutability of God do to our prayer life? Well, some might say, if God doesn't change, I don't see any reason to pray.

But of course, the great question is, what is the purpose of prayer? To change God's mind, or to change me? And while there is no way to adequately explain this, we nonetheless need to try and come to grips with it. And also, we need to realize that God has ordained prayer. He has promised to hear prayer, and promised to answer prayer.

And God demands that we pray. He insists that prayer is proper for his people. And it is quite clear from the whole tone of Scripture, that it has been God's design from the beginning, to apply blessing and benefit to those that seek it in prayer.

Well, we don't need to worry about changing God's mind in prayer. We must realize that prayer is of infinite benefit. And I don't know of any greater encouragement to prayer than this simple statement, I am the Lord, I came not.

God used to answer prayer. He answered prayer for Abraham. He answered prayer for David.

He answered prayer for Jesus when he was on earth. He answered prayer for the disciples. He answered prayer for George Miller.

He answered prayer for a host of others. And he will assuredly answer our prayers as their. He cannot help it.

He is the Lord, and he does not change. And now we come to the last matter that I said we wanted to spend a moment with. The direction for improvement that should flow out of this coming to grips with the immutability of God.

First, and I shall not enlarge upon these directions, though I hope you will. First, this matter of the immutability of God should strike through here into all our hearts. And God isn't going to change.

He's promised to burn the wicked with everlasting fire. He won't change. He'll not fail to keep even the smallest declaration.

And don't you think for one moment that when the wicked are turned into hell, and then they begin to scream in agony, that their screams and their tears are going to affect God. You beat your child, you have a plan to give him seven strong wallops, and his cry is so loud at the end of the second to change your mind. But not God.

God isn't going to be surprised by the agonizing wails of the wicked. He's not going to change his mind. I say it almost right here into us that God is immutable.

He won't change. His dealing with the wicked and his dealing with the righteous will remain. Secondly, it would be well for us to see that this teaching on the immutability of God is calculated to inspire worship.

This ought to move us to the deepest and most profound praise. We, we, we changing, sickle human beings, have the privilege of coming to an unchanging God. And he desires our praise and our worship.

And he pleads with us. Mind you, the unchanging God pleads with us to come and worship him. And thirdly, such teaching should lead us to total submission.

Remember that none of God's plans will be thwarted. Human rebellion will not alter God's plans. The activities of millions of demons will not affect his plans.

The gates of hell shall not prevail against God and his plans and his purpose. God knows what he's doing, and he's graciously invited us to join him. How can we, how can we engage in futile acts of rebellion or dawdle over our bowls of cottage and our trinkets of gold when God is calling us to victoriously in his army and to serve him, the unchanging God? This doctrine should lead us to full and total submission.

And I want to add also that this teaching should stir us to emulation. We are mere mortal, but we are invited to be like Christ. And may I close with this reminder, dear friends.

When Jesus was on earth, he set his face as a flint toward the city of Jerusalem, and he would not be distracted. Jesus aimed toward that holy city and toward the suffering there, toward the agony of his cross, toward his death, and he would not be distracted. Jesus was not distracted by human need.

Jesus was not distracted by sympathy for man in his awful plight. Jesus was not distracted by acts of mercy. Jesus didn't linger along the way for another day or two of teaching and preaching.

Jesus was not distracted by the feebleness of his disciples and his desire to build them up before he left. Jesus was not distracted by the brevity of his life, and Jesus was not distracted by the realization of his coming agony. He set his face as a flint toward Jerusalem and went there to his cross, and we are invited to join him in being like he.

Father in heaven, give to us the spirit of determinance that we may, with all the strength and the power imparted to us by the blessed Holy Spirit, follow Jesus unflinchingly and unceasingly to the end for his everlasting glory. Amen.

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