

The Strange and Wonderful Attributes of God

Lesson #21 – God’s Immutability & Faithfulness²³²¹

God is faithful, because He is immutable. If He were not immutable, if all of His plans were not perfect in love for His redeemed, if He had to adjust His plans throughout time, then He could not be faithful in all of His promises to all His saints and for all things.

I. Definition of God’s Immutability & Faithfulness

God’s Immutability – means that God changes not. He is unchanging in all of His attributes. He is unchanging in:

- All of His being,
 - All of His perfections,
 - All of His purposes,
 - All of His promises.
- } His attributes do not change.
} He is never other than perfect.
} His purposes are perfectly loving toward His redeemed.
} All of His promises will be fulfilled. ∴ He is always faithful.

Categorical Discussions:

Is this an Existential or a Relational Category? In God’s Immutability we see that this is **an existential part of His nature**. The consequences of this attribute is that in order to understand and love and know of God’s faithfulness with great certainty, we must trust Him in His sovereign purposes. Faithfulness and consequently, His Immutability are to us **a definite relational attribute**.

Is this an Incommunicable or a Communicable Category? In our weak and sinful nature as humans, we must in humbleness admit our weaknesses, our errors, and our misunderstandings and to consequently change our minds (often in repentance) and adjust to another course of action. And yet, there is a sense in which, up to a point, **we should honor our word, our promises to others**. And yet we are but dust. We are not perfect, nor omniscient, nor all wise. We should never make an absolute vow because of our weakness and lack of knowledge and wisdom. But when we promise it is best to qualify that promise, recognizing that we are not at all like God in our faithfulness.

There is great wisdom in a saying what the entertainer Tennessee Ernie Ford used to say at the end of His television program. We’ll be back next week on the same station at the same time, “if the good Lord’s willing and the creek don’t rise.” (An old and wise idiomatic phrase!)

Problem Statement: We modern American Christians have turned God into a servant, rather than honoring Him as the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. We have brought God low and turned Him into a good and kindly old man whose desire and responsibility is to make us happy. We have a theology that tests all of our desires and claims against the false truth that God just wants His people to be happy. We justify many wicked and evil things in this life with the statement, “God just wants me to be happy.”

We refuse to see and accept that God is sovereign and unchanging. He loves us, and in Christ, in obedience to God, we will be full of great, unimaginable joy when we reach our final destination, but not yet. Our joy is found in God’s multitude of gracious, but simple blessings in this life, and the certainty of the hope that we have in God’s promises in the life to come based on His integrity, His faithfulness, His immutability, His purpose, and His glory.

II. Logic and Importance of God’s Immutability & Faithfulness

God’s wisdom and knowledge is complete and cannot have any error or weakness. Since God is a good God, whose plan is perfect and loving towards those whom He has chosen before time began, how then could God have any need to adjust His plan?

His plan couldn’t be made better, could it? If so, then that plan might have been “good”, but it could not have been “perfect”. If God’s original and only plan was not perfect, then He would not be a perfect God.

As we dwell on these things, we find ourselves lost in mystery with many questions and not enough answers for our rebellious souls. Here we find a small part of the immense glory of God, **namely that we cannot conceive of His full glory and majestic, unchangeable purpose!** We are but dust, and yet we have been invited to fellowship with the great and glorious God of all creation. Dare we now question that God of perfection, our gracious and loving host?

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Isa 55:7-9 *Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.* ⁸*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord.* ⁹**For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.**

Consequences of God's Immutability & Faithfulness

Because of God's immutability, God is able to proclaim the events of future history without any possible challenge to His prophetic utterances.

1. God being omniscient, exhaustively knows all things, past, present, and future.
2. God being omnipotent can and will change any and all events in order to ensure His prophetic decrees are accomplished.
3. God does not change regarding His plans and purposes.

Therefore God's decrees and purposes are always accomplished regardless of creaturely attempts to defeat or change them.

Historicity of God's Immutability & Faithfulness

The immutability and faithfulness of God was well established in the Pentateuch and was generally understood by the early Jewish scribes and rabbis. It has been understood from the earliest days of the Church Fathers and has been taught in the Church throughout its history.

Today in the Church, it is clearly known and written about by Bible scholars, but not necessarily taught clearly from many pulpits. The full faithfulness of God is not taught practically by the fully Arminian churches where the "Perseverance of the Saints" is not clearly taught in their churches.

III. Scriptural Basis of God's Immutability & Faithfulness

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scriptures are quoted from the New American Standard Updated version (NASU)

Some verses pertinent to this goal of knowing of God's Immutability & Faithfulness:

Num 23:19 *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 it? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?*

1 Sam 15:29 *Also the Glory of Israel will not lie or change His mind; for He is not a man that He should change His mind.*

Ps 33:9-12 *For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.* ¹⁰*The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples.* ¹¹*The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart from generation to generation.* ¹²*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, the people whom He has chosen for His own inheritance.*

Ps 102:25-27 *Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands.* ²⁶*Even they will perish, but You endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.* ²⁷*But You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end.*

Isa 46:8-11 *Remember this, and be assured; recall it to mind, you transgressors.* ⁹*Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,* ¹⁰*Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure';* ¹¹*Calling a bird of prey from the east, the man of My purpose from a far country. **Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.***

Eph 3:8-13 *To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,* ⁹*and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;* ¹⁰*so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.*

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¹¹*This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,*
¹²*in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.*

Phil 1:6-7 *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.*

Heb 6:13-20 *For when God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, ¹⁴saying, "I WILL SURELY BLESS YOU AND I WILL SURELY MULTIPLY YOU." ¹⁵And so, having patiently waited, he obtained the promise. ¹⁶For men swear by one greater than themselves, and with them an oath given as confirmation is an end of every dispute. ¹⁷In the same way God, desiring even more **to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose**, interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have taken refuge would have strong encouragement to take hold of the hope set before us. ¹⁹**This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast** and one which enters within the veil, ²⁰where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

Rom 11:25-36 *For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery — so that you will not be wise in your own estimation — that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; ²⁶and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB." ²⁷"THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."*

²⁸*From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; ²⁹for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰For just as you once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so these also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. ³²For God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.*

³³*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! ³⁴For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, OR WHO BECAME HIS COUNSELOR? ³⁵Or WHO HAS FIRST GIVEN TO HIM THAT IT MIGHT BE PAID BACK TO HIM AGAIN? ³⁶For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.*

James 1:17-18 *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. ¹⁸In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.*

IV. Important Points About God's Immutability & Faithfulness

1st How God's Immutability & Faithfulness Relates to Other Attributes

God's immutability is sure because He is entirely sovereign and omniscient and omnipotent. In God's perfect Simpleness, we see these attributes melding into one purpose which God will surely accomplish without any shadow of turning or doubt.

2nd Why God's Immutability & Faithfulness are Important to Our Faith

It's only in the sure and confident hope that saints can deny their external world, stand against the whole world in support of God's glory and His purpose. This confidence is based on our sure knowledge of His unchangeableness and faithfulness to His word and His people. Without God's Immutability and Faithfulness, we saints of God can have no sure confidence in the permanence and certainty of His promises.

3rd Confessions or Creeds that Address God's Immutability & Faithfulness

London Confession of 1689, Chapter 2, Article 1 - The Lord our God is the one and only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself; who is infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; who is a most pure spirit, invisible, without body, parts, or passions; who only has immortality; who dwells in the light which no man can

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approach, who is **immutable**, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, in every way infinite, most holy, most wise, most free, most absolute; who works all things according to the counsel of His own **immutable** and most righteous will, for His own glory; who is most loving, gracious, merciful, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; Who is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him; and who, at the same time, is most just and terrible in His judgements, hating all sin and who will by no means clear the guilty.

4th Errors/Heresies that Deny God's Immutability & Faithfulness

The theological liberal "Process Theology" and the Evangelical "Open Theism" both deny God's immutability. Pagan gods are all limited gods, super-humans who change their plans, their purposes, and their nature over time. They are not transcendent, beyond the universe.

Important Quotes About God's Immutability & Faithfulness

The doctrine of God's immutability is of the highest significance for religion. The contrast between being and becoming marks the difference between the Creator and the creature. Every creature is continually becoming. It is changeable, constantly striving, seeks rest and satisfaction, and finds this rest in God, in Him alone, for only He is pure being and no becoming. Hence, in Scripture God is often called the Rock . . .

Herman Bavinck; *The Doctrine of God*; p. 149

First, God is immutable in His essence. His nature and being are infinite, and so, subject to no mutations. There never was a time when He was not; there never will come a time when He shall cease to be. God has neither evolved, grown, nor improved. All that he is today, He has ever been and ever will be. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal 3:6) is His own unqualified affirmation. He cannot change for the better, for He is already perfect; and being perfect, He cannot change for the worse, improvement or deterioration is impossible. He is perpetually the same. He only can say, "I am that I am" (Exod 3:14). He is altogether uninfluenced by the flight of time. There is no wrinkle upon the brow of eternity. Therefore His power can never diminish nor His glory ever fade. **A. W. Pink**; *The Attributes of God*; p. 46

What God does in time, He planned from eternity. And all that He planned in eternity He carries out in time. And all that He has in His Word committed Himself to do will infallibly be done. Thus we read of "the immutability of His counsel" to bring believers into full enjoyment of their promised inheritance, and of the immutable oath by which He confirmed this counsel to Abraham, the archetypal believer, both for Abraham's own assurance and for ours too (Heb 6:17-18). So it is with all God's announced intentions. They do not change. No part of His eternal plan changes. **J. I. Packer**; *Knowing God*; p. 80

"Thy testimonies which thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful" (Ps 119:138). God has not only told us the best, but He has not withheld the worst. He has faithfully described the ruin which the Fall has effected. He has faithfully diagnosed the terrible state which sin has produced. He has faithfully made known His inveterate hatred of evil, and that He must punish the same. He has faithfully warned us that he is "a consuming fire" (Heb 12:29). Not only does His Word abound in illustrations of His fidelity in fulfilling His promises, but it also records numerous examples of His faithfulness in making good His threatenings. Every stage of Israel's history exemplifies that solemn fact. So it was with individuals: Pharaoh, Korah, Achan and a host of others are so many proofs. And thus it will be with you, my reader: unless you have fled or do flee to Christ for refuge, the everlasting burning of the Lake of Fire will be your sure and certain portion. God is faithful. **A. W. Pink**; *The Attributes of God*; p. 69