

# UNIT 1: The Attributes of God

## Section 8: God's Immutability

*Assigned Reading:*  
A. W. Pink – *The Attributes of God*  
*The Immutability of God*

### Introduction:

Theologians who assent to and support God's simplicity have traditionally seen immutability as following from simplicity, so it is appropriate for us to discuss this "attribute" next in our study of God. **Tozer** explains that "only a being composed of parts can change, for change is basically a shift in the relations of the parts of a whole or the admission of some foreign element into the original composition." God's self-existence leads us to conclude that no "parts" are altered in God for He is not made up of parts (simplicity), and God's self-sufficiency explains why no element from outside of God can be added to Him. "All that God is He has always been, and all that He has been and is He will ever be."

By the way, this specific topic has been hotly debated in our own day by a group of "theologians" purporting a position named "process theology." They believe that all reality by its very nature must be "interdependent" and therefore "continually changing" or "in process." Since God "exists" they believe that God should be thought of in the same terms. They also state that God's primary quality is "love" and it is the fullest expression of his "relatedness" to the world.

**Q1:** How do we respond to the process theologians?

**Q2:** Why is God's immutability a necessary consequence of rightly understanding God?

**Q3:** Why is understanding God's immutability important?

### Outline:

#### **I. Immutability Defined**

##### *A. Definition*

1. **Pink**, "God is perpetually the same: subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations."
2. **Tozer**, "To say that God is immutable is to say that He never differs from Himself."
3. **Ryrie**, "God is unchanging – never inconsistent or growing or developing."
4. **Malachi 3:6** "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."
5. **God's Immutability described w/ Rock Imagery:**
  - a. **1 Sam 2:2** "There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides You, Nor is there any rock like our God."
  - b. **2 Sam 22:3** "My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; My savior, You save me from violence."
  - c. **2 Sam 22:32** "For who is God, besides the LORD? And who is a rock, besides our God?"
  - d. **Psalm 18:31** "For who is God, but the LORD? And who is a rock, except our God,"
  - e. **Psalm 78:35** "And they remembered that God was their rock, And the Most High God their Redeemer."

- f. **Isaiah 26:4** "Trust in the LORD forever, For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock.
- g. **Isaiah 44:8** "Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced *it* to you and declared *it*? And you are My witnesses. Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none."

## B. How is God Immutable?

1. IN HIS LIFE
  - a. God is immortal – Rom 1:23, I Tim 6:16, Ps 90:2
  - b. **Psalm 102:26-27** "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. <sup>27</sup> "But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end.
2. IN HIS ESSENCE
  - a. God's nature and being are infinite/perfect, and therefore are not subject to change!
  - b. God's perfections rule out any possibility of change in Him.
  - c. Were God to change for the better, it would mean that He was once not perfect.
  - d. Were God to change for the worse, it would mean that He is no longer perfect.
  - e. **Ex 3:14** God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" – ***He alone is perpetually the same!***
3. IN HIS ATTRIBUTES
  - a. Since we understand that God's attributes are best understood as "the essential qualities of God's being" and we know that God's exists necessarily for all eternity, the rightful conclusion is that God's attributes are immutable.
  - b. Whatever God was like before the Universe was called into existence, He is now, and will remain throughout all eternity...
  - c. **James 1:17** 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.
  - d. **Pink**, "The attributes of God can no more change than deity can cease to be."
    - (1) This is based upon God's "necessary" existence
    - (2) This is based upon rightly understanding God's attributes – i.e. God is His love!
  - e. **Jeremiah 31:3** The LORD appeared to him from afar, *saying*, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness.
  - f. **Psalm 100:5** For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting And His faithfulness to all generations.
4. IN HIS WILL and WORD
  - a. God does not "change His mind" – His purposes are unchanging...
  - b. Change in plans are made for one of two reasons:
    - (1) Lack of Foresight – not able to anticipate what would happen...
    - (2) Lack of Power – not able to execute a plan...
    - (3) GOD IS SUBJECT TO NEITHER OF THESE: He is omniscient and omnipotent!
  - c. **Psalm 119:89** Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.
  - d. **Psalm 33:11** The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart from generation to generation.
  - e. **Isaiah 40:7-8** The grass withers, the flower fades, When the breath of the LORD blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. <sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever.

- f. **Matt 5:18** "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (see also **Jn 10:35**)
- g. **Isaiah 46:9-11** "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, <sup>10</sup> 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'; <sup>11</sup> 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.
- h. **What about "God Repenting?"**
- (1) OBJECTION: Don't the scriptures speak of the Lord "changing his mind?"
- **Genesis 6:6** The LORD was sorry [some translate this repent] that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.
  - **Ex 32:9-14 – Moses' intercession...**
  - **1 Samuel 15:11** "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not carried out My commands." And Samuel was distressed and cried out to the LORD all night.
  - **Jonah 3:10** When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God relented concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do *it*.
  - **Joel 2:13-14** And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. <sup>14</sup> Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the LORD your God?
- (2) ANSWER: Scripture does not contradict itself... look at these verses...
- **Numbers 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 Samuel 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."
  - **Rom 11:29** for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable [KJV "without repentance"].
  - **Pink**, "When He institutes *a change in His dealings* with men, He describes His course as "repenting." – a condescension [anthropomorphism]... (like God "walking" or having "eyes," "ears," or "hands," etc.)...
  - **Packer**, "The reference in each case is to a reversal of God's previous treatment of particular people, consequence upon their reaction to that treatment. There is no suggestion that this reaction was not foreseen, or that it took God by surprise and was not provided for in His eternal plan."
- i. **Packer**, "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."
- j. **Erickson**, "The biblical view is not that God is static but stable. He is active and dynamic, but in a way that is stable and consistent with His nature."

## II. Immutability Applied

### A. *Difference Between Creator and Creature*

1. Surely, this is one of the excellencies that separates the Creator from His creation!
2. It is impossible for God to change, and meanwhile it is impossible for men not to...
  - a. **Pink**, “By nature we tend toward nothingness, since we came from nothing. Nothing stays our annihilation but the will and sustaining power of God. None can sustain himself a single moment. We are entirely dependent on the Creator for every breath we draw.” – **Acts 17:28** “In whom we live, and move, and having our being”
  - b. **Herman Bavinck**, “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.”
3. **As far as this goes for Christians, we can rejoice in this fact!**
  - a. God has introduced HUGE change in our lives
  - b. **2 Corinthians 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.
  - c. Dead to Alive... Old to New...
  - d. **Ephesians 2:5** even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),
  - e. **2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

### B. *Comfort and Terror*

1. God cannot be coaxed or comprised into changing... He remains constant!
2. What tremendous comfort is afforded Christians in this regard!
  - a. Everything else around us is constantly changing, and no thing can be securely, utterly, and ultimately trusted... Only God can be infinitely trusted!
  - b. The very being of God guarantees the fulfillment of His promises!
  - c. **Isaiah 54:10** "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has compassion on you.
  - d. **Hebrews 6:17-18** In the same way God, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, <sup>18</sup> so 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.
  - e. **Grudem**, “If God is not unchanging then the whole basis of our faith begins to fall apart, and our understanding of the universe begins to unravel. This is because our faith and hope and knowledge all ultimately depend on a *person* who is *infinitely worthy of trust*—because he is *absolutely* and *eternally* unchanging in His being, perfections, purposes, and promises.
3. What tremendous reason for terror for those not in Christ...
  - a. Just as God is steadfast and unchanging in His love, He is steadfast in His wrath!

- b. **Ezekiel 8:18** "Therefore, I indeed will deal in wrath. My eye will have no pity nor will I spare; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, yet I will not listen to them."
- c. **Revelation 19:15** From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.
- d. **Revelation 14:14-20** Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud *was* one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. <sup>15</sup> And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." <sup>16</sup> Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. <sup>17</sup> And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. <sup>18</sup> Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." <sup>19</sup> So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered *the clusters from* the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. <sup>20</sup> And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.
- e. **God hates sin eternally... Here is the reason for the eternity of punishment!**

### C. Prayer

1. We do not serve a capricious God... we can pray with confidence when we pray for things that the Lord has made known to us as being "His will."
2. What hope would we have apart from this? If God "changed" what He wanted continually, there would be no way of knowing how to pray according to God's will!
3. There is never reason for "worry" that God might not be receptive or that His affections might cool off or His enthusiasm wane...
4. Importance of Prayer: way in which God has ordained to work... He has decided to answer prayer, and therefore is also superintending and moving His people to pray!
5. Prayer changes us!
6. **1 John 5:14** This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.

### D. Bible Study

1. Many have leveled the charge against the Bible as not being "relevant"
2. It is obvious that the "world/culture" of the Bible is quite far removed from our present days – different time, place, culture, etc...
3. The link to relevance is found in this fact: God is unchanging!
4. **Packer**, "The God with whom [the OT and NT characters] had to do is the same God with whom we have to do. We could sharpen the point by saying *exactly* the same God; for God does not change in the least particular."
5. This truth effectively bridges the gulf between men and women of Biblical times and the present... God's immutability is our connection and reference point!